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Visual literacy in adult English language teaching: An exploration of teachers' understandings and self-reported practices

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Monash University in 2019
Faculty of Education

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly visual society, visual literacy – the ability to construct meaning from visual texts – plays a central role in effective communication. Thus, visual literacy has become the subject of scholarly research in many fields and has been incorporated in teaching and learning across a range of disciplines. Accordingly, Australia has been the context of studies that explore how learners across the stages of schooling develop visual literacy, and the ways in which educators incorporate visual texts in their pedagogies. Nevertheless, how the development of visual literacy can be embedded in classroom practice appears to be largely overlooked in adult English language teaching (ELT). This study contributes to knowledge in the field of visual literacy in the context of adult ELT – an ever-growing sector of Australia’s education. It explores teachers’ understandings of visual literacy and examines their self-reported practices regarding the use of visual texts with their adult learners.

Literacy Studies and Cultural Studies, specifically Green’s 3D model of literacy and Callow’s 3D model of viewing, provide the theoretical grounding for the qualitative study, which employs a case study methodology to support the research design. Participants included 15 teachers of English language intensive courses for overseas students (ELICOS) or Government-funded English language programs for migrants and refugees, across five English language centres in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Semi-structured individual interviews and two focus groups using a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) approach as a form of photo-elicitation were employed as methods of data collection. The data were examined via a thematic analysis process. Aspects of Green’s three dimensions of literacy – operational, cultural and critical – and Callow’s affective dimension provided a lens to explore the diverse ways in which the study participants framed their thinking about visual literacy.

The findings suggest that, although the participating teachers routinely employed visual texts in their classrooms, these practices favoured improving their learners’ reading, writing and speaking skills, over fostering meaningful and critical interpretation and production of visual texts. Further, the lack of overt instruction regarding visual literacy in pre-service education and in-service professional development for adult English language teachers, poses challenges. Hence before asking adult ELT professionals to help their learners develop visual literacy, these professionals need support to become versed in visual literacy themselves. Implications from the study may be used to inform change toward more explicit inclusion of visual literacy in pre-service teacher education and professional development initiatives, which may, in turn, positively influence policy and curriculum planning and delivery in adult ELT programs.

LAY ABSTRACT

In a visual society, visual literacy – the ability to meaningfully interpret and create images – plays a central role in effective communication. This study explores adult English language teachers' understandings of visual literacy, and their self-reported practices using images in their classrooms that are populated by overseas students preparing for university, or migrants settling in Australia. Findings revealed that the participating teachers used images to help their learners improve their reading, writing and speaking skills, rather than develop visual literacy. This approach signals the need for more explicit inclusion of visual literacy in teacher education and in adult English language teaching programs.

DECLARATION

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Date: 27 June 2019

SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY DURING ENROLMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my supervisors: Associate Professor Janet Scull, Dr Katrina Tour and Dr Miriam Faine, thank you for your wisdom, expertise and mentorship. Your complementary approaches to this process enriched my study in so many ways, and I learnt so much from you, both as an emerging researcher, and as a person. Janet, your ability to see the big picture helped me move through the various stages of the research, put the pieces of the puzzle together and not panic (too much). Katrina, your eagle eyes and enthusiasm for academia are incomparable. Thank you for your generous and detailed feedback, and your collegiality. Miriam, although you joined the team for a short while, you came in with a fresh view, which inspired me to explore new ideas while allowing the project to ‘slow cook’. Thank you. I hold nothing but gratitude and admiration for the three of you. Thank you, also to my milestone panel: Dr Scott Bulfin, Dr Maria Gindidis and Dr Dat Bao. Your curiosity, ample feedback, questions and suggestions were invaluable contributions to my project.

To the wonderful team in the Monash Education Graduate Research Office, thank you for your continuous support. Students and academics could not do what we do without your work behind the scenes. To the organisers of the Three Minute Thesis competition and the Monash University TEDx, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my research via these dynamic platforms. These experiences were both nerve-wracking and exciting. I also acknowledge Rosemary Viete for her proofreading service of this thesis in its final draft. Thank you, Rosemary, for providing grammatical and semantic feedback, while preserving my meaning, style, organisation and voice.

A special mention to Dr Judith Rochecouste, who showed great interest in my research. Your wisdom and inspiring conversations helped me get unstuck at times when I needed a fresh perspective. It was wonderful to trade my manual work in your garden for your wise advice and lovely lunches. I think you just wanted to force me to take a break and be out in the sun for a change.

To my ‘PhD wife’ Linette, thank you. From that very first seminar we knew we would support and celebrate each other through this journey and become friends for life. You’re next! To my friends in the faculty: Claire, Luke, Jennifer and Jen, thank you. Sharing our successes and struggles made it all feel ‘normal’ and helped me carry on. Also, thank you to my dear friends outside academia – my Colombian and Australian families – for checking if I was okay regularly and for reminding me I could do this. To my siblings, nephews and nieces in Colombia, who do not quite understand why I am a ‘perennial student’, but respect and support it, thank you.

Of course, this study would not have been possible without the 15 participating adult English language teachers across the five English language centres in Melbourne. You generously gave up your time and wisdom, and shared your diverse views on this 'thing' called visual literacy. I am forever indebted to you. Thank you, thank you.

To Stephen, thank you for your patience and support, for giving me the space to write, feeding me, listening to my ideas and celebrating my milestones. Also, to my fluffy black cat Alex, who played the role of my loyal research assistant. Her purring on my lap was a form of meditation during the long days and nights of writing.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Dad, José Luis Villamizar Melo – The Poet, who taught me about the importance of education from an early age and always encouraged me to dream big.

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult basic education and training
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACRL	Association of College and Research Libraries
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMES	Australian Migrant English Service
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
CSWE	Certificate in Spoken and Written English
DELTA	Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
EA	English Australia
EAL	English as an additional language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a foreign language
EFS	English for Further Studies
EIL	English as an international language
ESL	English a second language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
ELT	English language teaching
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
GE	General English
Gov. Funded	Government-funded (English language program provider)
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISLPR	International Standard Language Proficiency Rating
IVLA	International Visual Literacy Association
L1	A person's first language
LLN	English language, literacy and numeracy
LOTE	Languages other than English
NESB	Non-English-speaking backgrounds
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SCOTESE	Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment
SEE	Skills for Employment and Education
TAFE	Technical and further education
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
USA	United States of America
VALBEC	Victoria Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VTs	Visual Thinking Strategies

1 INTRODUCTION

Images play an essential role in the ever-growing communicative landscape of contemporary societies (Anstey & Bull, 2018; García-Sánchez, Isla, Therón, & Casado-Lumbreras, 2019; Kędra, 2018; Matusiak, Heinbach, Harper, & Bovee, 2019; Serafini, 2017). Google images, YouTube videos, Instagram pictures and emojis (or pictographs) via diverse digital technologies are only a few of the many visual media 21st century people engage with in their personal lives, at work and while they study. This is in addition to other traditional methods of non-verbal communication, such as employing body language and gestural expressions, and observing and interpreting the innumerable signs displayed in public spaces.

For an individual to be able to construct meaning from images, they must possess visual literacy (Bowen, 2017; Kędra, 2018; Serafini, 2017). Thus, the study of visual literacy has gained attention among scholars across a wide range of disciplines, including the arts, technology, design, science and education (Avgerinou, 2007; Barton, 2016; Bull & Anstey, 2007; Callow, 2012; Farrell, 2015; Kazmierczak, 2001; Metros & Woolsey, 2006; Nanavaty, 2018; Peña Alonso, 2018; Serafini, 2017; Victoria, 2018; Williams, 2016). Furthermore, as modern societies have become more visual, images have gained a prominent position in language and literacy learning (Hekmati, Ghahremani Ghajar, & Navidinia, 2018; Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Lankshear, 2003; Nixon & Kerin, 2012; Snyder, 2008; Takaya, 2016; The New London Group, 1996).

1.1 Background of the study: Visual literacy in a world of images

With the social and semiotic advances in today's world, speech and writing are only two of many components of communication (Kress, 2017). Accordingly, language learners need to critically engage with diverse types of texts – not only written or spoken – in order to be active and transformative agents in society (Green, 2012b; Messaris, 2012; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). Although the image in the field of education has been often construed as a dispensable embellishment to words (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Millard & Marsh, 2001), contemporary research on language and literacy learning acknowledges it as a powerful instrument in the development of written and spoken language (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017; Harmer, 2013; Hekmati et al., 2018; Victoria, 2018). This study expands this view, and positions the image as a key medium of communication in the context of multicultural adult Australian classrooms.

Considering that the visual plays a prominent role in enriching learning and supporting students to use different means to communicate (Anstey & Bull, 2010; Callow, 2012; Donaghy & Xerri, 2017), this

study explores visual literacy and the use of images from the perspective of adult English language teaching (ELT). Reflection on my own classroom practices with images has provoked a number of questions: What guides how I select the images I show to my students from diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds? Should I be using visuals merely to support their written and spoken language development? Are images simply prompts for written or spoken words? Is there more to it than showing them pictures or videos to clarify concepts, explain grammar points, drill vocabulary or clarify the meaning of a new word?

As an adult English language teacher¹, I wondered if programs offered by English language centres provided learners with opportunities to extend their literacy practices and their understanding of our increasingly visual society. I questioned whether educators and institutions in adult ELT ensured that learners were able not only to decode and produce written texts, but to navigate images beyond the classroom and in their everyday lives. Despite the benefits of using images to support reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in ELT, it seemed that adult ELT research and practice remained preoccupied with the development of traditional literacy skills (Brandon, 2015; Bundensen, 2011; Carey & Robertson, 2015; Department of Education and Training, 2013). There was limited research on how adult English language learners might acquire visual literacy or how teachers could foster its development. In the following sections I introduce the notion of visual literacy and contextualise it within the field of adult ELT in Australia. In the literature review chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) I provide a more in-depth account of diverse scholarly views on visual literacy and related concepts.

1.1.1 An operational definition of visual literacy

Conceptualising visual literacy has proven to be a contentious and complex task for scholars from many disciplines (Avgerinou, 2007; Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Brill & Maribe Branch, 2007; Michelson, 2017; Peña & Dobson, 2016). In order to provide an operational definition that can guide the reader through this chapter, I offer an explanation presented by Bamford (2003) in *The Visual Literacy White Paper*, a research paper that has been widely recognised as point of reference in understanding visual literacy (Serafini, 2017). Bamford asserts:

Visual literacy involves developing the set of skills needed to be able to interpret the content of visual images, examine the social impact of those images and to discuss purpose, audience and ownership. It includes the ability to visualise internally, communicate visually and interpret visual images. In addition,

¹ For clarification, the terms 'adult English language teacher' and 'adult English language teaching' are used throughout this thesis - and in some of the literature - to signify that the teacher or the teaching of English language is directed towards adult learners.

students need to be aware of the manipulative uses and ideological implications of images. Visual literacy also involves making judgements of the accuracy, validity and worth of images. A visually literate person is able to discriminate and make sense of visual objects and images; create visuals; comprehend and appreciate the visuals created by others; and visualise objects in their mind's eye. To be an effective communicator in today's world, a person needs to be able to interpret, create and select images to convey a range of meanings (p. 1).

In this definition, Bamford (2003) foregrounds two key arguments, which inform this research. Firstly, she acknowledges that an individual needs to develop visual literacy in order to make meaning of images and understand the reactions these may cause in people. Secondly, she considers visual literacy a reciprocal process, in which producing images is as important as observing them. These ideas suggest that as still and moving images are pervasive in contemporary education contexts, at work and in our private and social lives, people need to learn to interpret, use and produce them effectively.

1.1.2 Visual literacy in Australian education

Educators across the stages of schooling utilise images to facilitate language and literacy learning (Callow, 2007). For instance, practices in the early childhood education context in Australia are supported by educational policy which emphasises the importance of developing young learners' visual literacy. This is explicitly stated in official policy documents, such as *The Early Years Framework for Australia* (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009). This document highlights the use of visual resources as an inherent element in the development of children as confident and involved learners and effective communicators. The Framework states that children 'begin to reflect on themselves as learners, in particular on their feelings about learning, by using visual aids that illustrate their responses to learning' (p. 26).

In parallel with the primary context, visual literacy features in language education in secondary settings. For instance, the English domain in The Victorian Curriculum from Foundation to Level 10 (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2018) addresses the skill of viewing in addition to reading, writing, listening and speaking. Publicly available curriculum documents explain that the prescribed texts can be written, spoken or multimodal – that is combining language with other means of communication, such as images, sounds or the spoken word. In the context of ELT within the school system, the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Companion documents to the Victorian Curriculum outline that the development of reading in English language includes 'understanding, interpreting, reflecting upon, responding to and enjoying written and visual texts' (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2012, p. 8) . The Companion provides a framework for

the provision of suitable learning programs and assessment systems tailored to students in Victorian schools who are learning English as an additional language.

The examples above illustrate the support for the development of visual literacy across the stages of Australian schooling, at least in curriculum documents. Alter (2009) declares that 'in all Australian states the primary and secondary English curriculum incorporates the study of visual literacy' (p. 4). However, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggest that concern for visual literacy decreases as learners progress through their schooling. In the children's early years, teachers encourage them to create and draw meaning from pictures and illustrations with as much emphasis as they place on words (Mackenzie, 2014). Nonetheless, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that by the time children reach secondary school their graphic work is not always critiqued with the same rigour as their writing, and illustrations are generally seen as complementary to the written work, rather than as a means of communication in themselves. Furthermore, learners are steered towards regarding images as functional rather than as a means of self-expression, and the images that appear in textbooks are often representations with a technical purpose.

The limited opportunity for the development of visual literacy might be partially offset by the fact that approaches to visual communication in subjects such as English are included in primary and secondary curricula (Alter, 2009). Nevertheless, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 17) state that in terms of visual literacy 'institutional education, under the pressure of often reactionary political demands, produces illiterates'. Further, Kress and van Leeuwen allude to how changes in government policy, and thus reforms in areas of the education system, often result in more focused attention to subjects traditionally considered as essential, often result in more focused attention to subjects traditionally considered as essential – such as maths and science – over, for instance, the arts.

Luke (2018) contributes to the argument that literacy education responds to political economies, suggesting that in Australia, individual states have decided on the use and streamlining of particular textual practices, whether these be the reading of prescribed novels or picture books, themed essay writing or critiquing newspaper articles or websites. He argues that the institutional and governmental arrangements that dictate educational reform, determine what is most important and what is not, which also affects curricular focus and the distribution of material and spatial resources within schools. The apparent lack of concern for the development of visual literacy skills in secondary schooling may have repercussions regarding the extent to which adult learners are able to effectively move from broad perceptions to close observations of visual features in images (Alter, 2009). Building on this

discussion of literacies privileged in the school sector, in the next section, I explore the role of visual literacy within the adult ELT field.

1.2 Context of the study: ELT in Australia

The widely accepted umbrella term 'ELT' is at present used to encompass the work of educators in various settings. ELT includes English as a foreign language (EFL) – the teaching of English in a non-English-speaking region; English as a second language (ESL) – a term traditionally employed in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand to refer to the use of English by refugees and immigrants; and English as an additional language (EAL) – a more recently adopted term that indicates that English is not the students' first language, but it can be their second or third (Boulter, 2007; Bundesen, 2011; Carey & Robertson, 2015; Faine, 2008; Webster & Lu, 2012). EAL is now more typically used in Australia, both in the school sector and in adult education.

ELT has its foundations in a branch of applied linguistics known as second language acquisition (SLA), which is dominated by cognitive and behaviourist paradigms (Cross, 2010). ELT research in Australia (and globally) has historically been guided by SLA theory with a focus on the cognitive aspects of methodology, classroom strategies and curriculum. Breen (1985) argues that such an approach disregards the social reality of language learning, which is 'experienced and created by teachers and learners' (p. 141). Faine (2008) adds that SLA-based understandings of language as a fixed construct that could be passed on from teacher to learner are out-dated. Nevertheless, the past three decades have seen greater understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of language teaching and learning. This has raised awareness of the need to understand the contexts within which these processes take place (Cross, 2010) and to pay attention to 'what language teachers think, know, believe, and do' (Borg, 2003, p. 81), in addition to the students' needs.

Current sociocultural approaches to language learning see it 'not as an individualistic, internal mental process but as an essential social activity where learners are active and interactive, and where their social world impacts on their learning and language development' (Hall, 2018, p. 74). Thus, ELT methodologies have shifted from a strong focus on grammar and form and an understanding of language learning as a mechanical process of habit formation (Rivers, 1964) to a more 'humanistic' view (Grundy, 2004) that recognises the importance of learners' self-discovery and autonomy. Humanistic approaches to ELT support progressive educational values and beliefs about learning

which regard teachers not as the source of knowledge, but as ‘enablers or facilitators who assist learners in their self-discovery’ (Grundy, 2004, p. 99).

Adult ELT in Australia has been influenced ideologically by the concept of English as an international language (EIL) (Carey & Robertson, 2015; Sharifian, 2013). EIL is based on the understanding that ‘mother-tongue varieties of English are not necessarily considered appropriate targets either for learning or for communicating in countries where English is used for cross-cultural or cross-linguistic communication’ (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 196). EIL sees English as a lingua franca in culturally and linguistically diverse environments, such as Australian adult English classrooms. Sharifian (2014) – a strong advocate of this humanistic social interactionist conceptualisation of ELT – argues that English ‘needs to be taught as a pluricentric language in Australia, focusing on developing learners’ intercultural communication skills and meta-cultural competence’ (p. 35).

1.2.1 Adult migrants, refugees and overseas students

The adult ELT field in Australia has been transformed by two major phenomena since the mid twentieth century: the global flow of immigrants and refugees into the country and the internationalisation of Australian education (Bundesen, 2011). Since the 1950s, Australia has provided newly arrived immigrants and refugees with comprehensive, nationally-funded settlement and EAL programs. The main adult language and literacy initiative for these cohorts is the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) (Lowes, 2004; Martin, 2000). At the other end of the spectrum, boosting the success and international recognition of Australian universities and other post-secondary education institutions (i.e., Vocational education and training [VET] providers) is the large number of fee-paying overseas students (Carey & Robertson, 2015; Rizvi, 2011). ELICOS (English language intensive courses for overseas students) programs are provided for such students. The term ELICOS was established in the 1980s and continues to be used across Australia to differentiate this particular category of EFL learners (Bundesen, 2011; Faine, 2008).

The AMEP began as a temporary national English program for adults from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) arriving in Australia, in order to contribute to their resettlement and help immigrants understand and adhere to the Australian way of life (Martin, 1978; Oliver, Rochecoste, & Nguyen, 2017). In its origins, it was delivered prior to embarkation and on the ships used to transport newcomers in the late 1940s (Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), 2008). By 1950, the AMEP had established a national system of classes with the immigration portfolio being primarily responsible for its development and maintenance (Lowes, 2004). Since 1993, the AMEP adopted the

Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) – accredited by AMES New South Wales – as the national AMEP curriculum (NSW AMES [Adult Migrant English Service], 1993). Throughout its history, and due to the needs of its audience (including refugees with low literacy in their first language), the CSWE has mainly focused on English for social and work contexts outside the classroom (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007).

Currently, the AMEP is accredited with the Australian Quality Training Framework (Ehrich, Kim, & Ficorilli, 2010) to deliver the CSWE (Ehrich et al., 2010), which is offered through flexible delivery methods to meet the various needs of students and their living circumstances (Department of Industry, 2015). The AMEP provides migrants and humanitarian entrants, who are 18 years of age or over and who do not have a functional level of English language proficiency, with up to 510 hours of English language tuition. Functional English is defined in the Australian Immigration Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1971) as ‘basic social proficiency in English across all four macro skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking’ (p. 1). Basic social proficiency in English is assessed using the International Standard Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) (Ellis, 2013).

In contrast to the AMEP, which aims to facilitate migrants and refugees’ adjustment in Australian society, the goal in ELICOS programs is to prepare students with the language skills required to succeed in tertiary or vocational education, which means ELICOS provision also acts as a ‘feeder’ to these educational sectors (Australian Education International, 2011; Carey & Robertson, 2015). In addition, the ELICOS industry attracts large numbers of students completing ‘English-only’ courses (General English or GE courses) for the purposes of career progression, skilled migration and business, as well as a serving as a pathway to further studies overseas (Bundensen, 2011; Carey & Robertson, 2015).

Universities officially began to provide English language training for their future students with the centres at the University of New South Wales in the late 1960s, and at the University of Canberra (then Canberra College of Advanced Education) and La Trobe University in the early 1970s. From the early 1980s, AMEP staff established privately owned language schools, which became the first ELICOS centres, followed by other private and public VET providers. Universities and colleges then introduced formal teaching qualifications in the specialty now known globally as TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of other languages). By 1982 there were nine accredited colleges across the Australian Capital Territory and the states of New South Wales and Victoria. These institutions amalgamated to become a professional body – the ELICOS Association, which in 2000 started trading as English

Australia (EA). EA is currently the peak national body for the ELICOS section of international education in Australia (Bundensen, 2011).

Today, ELICOS providers offer a range of programs tailored to the different needs of learners. The courses offered include: General English (GE) focusing on developing general English language proficiency for a range of contexts; English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Further Studies (EFS), with a general aim to equip students with the spoken and written English they will need to study in an Australian university or VET institute. Additionally, exam preparation courses aim to provide students with guidance and practice, particularly in preparation for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam (Elder & O'Loughlin, 2003; Feast, 2002; Gribble, Blackmore, Morrissey, & Capic, 2016). Finally there are English for special purposes (ESP) courses, such as English for Business, for Health Professionals, Teachers and for Hospitality (among others) (English Australia, 2015). ELICOS students are generally offered and required to engage in an average of 20 hours of exposure to the language during a standard study week (ELICOS, 2014). These can be a combination of face-to-face instruction and independent learning online or activities at dedicated spaces within their English language centre (e.g., computer labs, libraries, resource centres).

In terms of how the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills is measured by program providers in the ELICOS sector, research on English language testing has indicated that IELTS scores constitute the most widely employed benchmark (Elder & O'Loughlin, 2003; Feast, 2002; Gribble et al., 2016; O'Loughlin, 2013). There are other English language proficiency tests available and in use by tertiary and vocational education institutions to identify whether applicants meet their English language requirements for course entry. Such tests include the Test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL), the Cambridge English test, and the Pearson PTE Academic test (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2018). Nevertheless, IELTS remains the most highly regarded English proficiency test by Australian universities and the Australian government (Feast, 2002). As a result, ELICOS centres tend to map levels of achievement in their curricula to the nine-band scale that the test uses to clearly classify levels of English language proficiency (Birrell, 2006; Carroll, 1996; Green, 2006). The nine bands range from non-user (band score 1) to expert language user (band score 9) (IELTS, 2018b).

1.2.2 Visual literacy for adult English language learners

As outlined above, the two major streams of English language programs for adults in Australia (AMEP and ELICOS) do not operate under common curricula or administrative policies. Whereas AMEP

providers adhere to the nationally accredited CSWE curriculum, in the ELICOS sector the curriculum is developed by each English language centre. Guidelines among ELICOS providers are not prescriptive in terms of course content (curriculum and syllabus). They are concerned with being compliant with the National Standards for ELICOS set by The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (National Code) (Australian Education International, 2011). In addition, ELICOS providers must follow the Threshold Standards dictated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2011). TEQSA is the peak body that ensures administrative and welfare requirements are met before ELICOS providers are registered (ELICOS, 2014).

The disparity in curricula and governing bodies creates challenges when attempting to discern the ways in which English language programs offered in Australia for adult learners approach visual literacy. In the case of the AMEP, de Silva Joyce (2014) argues that, although its syllabi prompt teachers to foster the development of visual and multimodal literacy, explicit strategies and/or activities to support teaching are not evident. In ELICOS, as each provider designs and delivers their own curriculum – and maintains this as private intellectual property – it is difficult to access documents which detail the pedagogic practices aimed at fostering the development of students' visual literacy as a component of language learning.

1.2.3 Adult ELT and global competitiveness

In catering for the needs of adult migrants and overseas students in Australia, in recent years, evaluation and prescription of adult literacy curricula have been heavily influenced by employer groups, business councils, and other economic think-tanks (Farrell, 2014; Jackson & Slade, 2008). Furthermore, the current provision of adult language, literacy and numeracy education in Australia is driven by government policies which have as their main objective 'to enhance Australia's global competitiveness' (Mayer, 2016, p. 24). Global competitiveness refers to 'the ability of countries to provide high levels of prosperity to their citizens' (Petrarca & Terzi, 2018, p. 2197). With focus on increasing global competitiveness, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001), the aim of adult language and literacy courses should be to develop learners' ability to access further education or obtain and retain employment. Furthermore, Schuller, Hammond, Preston, Brassett-Grundy, and Bynner (2004) maintain that the effectiveness of language and literacy programs should be measured against the economic return that investing in skills development brings.

The OECD's Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies has contributed to determining the purpose and outcomes of adult education programs (Jackson & Slade, 2008; Searle, 2004). In Australia, key government agencies take into account the OECD's objectives to formulate and implement country-wide schemes, such as the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment [SCOTESE], 2012). The strategy document states that 'by 2022, at least two thirds of working age Australians will have the literacy and numeracy skills needed to take full advantage of opportunities afforded by the new economy' (p. i). In this strategy, the SCOTESE addresses common national goals and priorities which promote basic skills for adults, with the aim of ensuring that all working-age people living in Australia possess the indispensable foundation skills to succeed at work. In the strategy document, visual literacy is not included in the notion of foundation skills. Foundation skills are identified as:

- English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) – listening, speaking, reading, writing, digital literacy and use of mathematical ideas; and
- employability skills, such as collaboration, problem solving, self-management, learning and information and communication technology (ICT) skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment [SCOTESE], 2012, p. 2).

Visual literacy is not mentioned in this Government document that predicates what is fundamental for adult Australians to be able to participate in the workplace and their community and in education and training (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment [SCOTESE], 2012). These guidelines exert a strong influence on the approach that the participating teachers take in incorporating images in their classroom, and consequently, their thinking regarding visual literacy. From a global competitiveness viewpoint (Petrarca & Terzi, 2018) this definition of foundation skills suggests that the adult English language teacher's ultimate goal should be to help students increase their reading, writing and speaking abilities, in order to improve their likelihood of accessing the labour market.

Emphasis on the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening abilities is also pervasive in the benchmark used to determine literacy levels in NESB adults wishing to successfully obtain employment or entry into tertiary or vocational studies in Australia. The IELTS test has been widely adopted by peak industry bodies in several professions as a means of determining the English language skills required of graduates from foreign institutions wishing to gain professional registration in Australia (Gribble et al., 2016), and by university admissions departments across the country (O'Loughlin, 2013). That is, employers and educational institutions accept NESB employees and/or

students based on their IELTS scores. Hence, programs designed to prepare overseas students for university studies in Australia – ELICOS – map their curricula to IELTS requirements. Importantly, the IELTS test assesses specifically reading, writing, speaking and listening skills (IELTS, 2018a); again, this is an approach based on traditional understandings of literacy, which do not include visual literacy or viewing.

1.3 The problem

The background and context of the study sections above have indicated that the development of visual literacy does not appear to be addressed in adult ELT, as it is in the primary and secondary school sectors of Australian education. Moreover, visual literacy is not necessarily considered by global competitiveness standards to be a basic capability needed by adult learners in order to access further education or obtain employment. In addition, the absence of streamlined curricula across ELICOS and Government-funded adult English language programs creates complexity in trying to ascertain to what extent the development of reading and writing is privileged over the critical and meaningful engagement with and production of images in classroom practices. Congruently, de Silva Joyce (2014) argues that while adult ELT programs include objectives that require learners to possess a degree of visual literacy, there is little guidance on how educators in this field are to determine how and why images are used in their lessons. All these multiple influences constrain teaching visual literacy in adult ELT.

Australia has been the context of studies that explore the ways in which primary and secondary school teachers incorporate images in their pedagogies, and how their learners develop visual literacy (Asha, 2009; Atkins, 2006; Barton, 2016; Bennett, 2011; Callow, 2003, 2007, 2016; Kalantzis & Cope, 2014). However, while this body of work provides important insights into the status of and issues around visual literacy across the stages of schooling, this subject appears to be largely overlooked in adult ELT in Australia. Ostensibly, in this sector of Australia's education, there has been limited research on how the development of visual literacy can be embedded in classroom practice (de Silva Joyce, 2014). Most of the research in adult ELT suggests that institutions, policy makers and educators remain primarily concerned with the improvement of written and oral language skills (Brandon, 2015; Bundensen, 2011; Carey & Robertson, 2015).

In other parts of the world, scholars such as Blummer (2015), Bowen (2017), Emanuel and Challons-Lipton (2013), Hattwig, Bussert, Medaille, and Burgess (2013), McInnish and Wright (2005), and Rosier

and Dyer (2010), have investigated the role of visual literacy across various disciplines in adult and tertiary education contexts. Visual literacy has also gained the attention of researchers in the field of teacher education (Farrell, 2013; Palmer, 2015). Furthermore, other overseas studies have addressed visual literacy and teachers' use of images, specifically in adult ELT (Arbuckle, 2004; Hekmati et al., 2018; Takaya, 2016; Theuma, 2017). However, teachers' perspectives on visual literacy and the role it plays in the adult ELT classroom remain an under-researched and thus, under-theorised subject in Australia.

1.4 Aim, significance of the study and research questions

This study aims to foreground adult English language teacher's perspectives on visual literacy and their use of images in the classroom. Exploring teachers' perspectives may be regarded as a generative approach, which will help to identify their professional needs related to teaching visual literacy in adult ELT, and inform formal education and in-service professional development programs for current and future educators in the adult ELT industry. Furthermore, building on teachers' knowledge of visual literacy and its importance in relation to language teaching and learning, the study may generate important implications for policy making, curriculum design and classroom delivery, assisting in the advancement of the ever-growing sector of Australia's ELICOS and Government-funded adult English language programs.

To gain insight into how adult ELT educators understand visual literacy and apply their views in their classroom practices, I formulated the following three research questions:

1. How do adult English language teachers conceptualise visual literacy?
2. How do adult English language teachers describe their classroom practices in relation to the use of visual texts?
3. What shapes adult English language teachers' understanding of visual literacy and their use of visual texts in their classroom practices?

The three research questions guided the design of a case study of 15 adult English language teachers across five language centres in Melbourne, Australia. With the first question, I aimed to uncover both overt and implied personal views on the subject, in order to better understand how and to what extent visual literacy played a part in the everyday discourse of these language educators, and in their ideas surrounding the use of visual texts. Research questions two and three explore connections between understandings, teaching practices and the educators' reasons behind these practices. The second research question explores the participating teachers' self-reported practices, based on their

descriptions of classroom strategies, exercises and activities in which they had included the use of images. The third research question sought to investigate the beliefs that influenced the participants' approaches to the use of images in their teaching. Thus, through their own accounts, I explored ideas regarding their pre-service education (Farrell, 2015), professional experiences (Cloonan, 2010; Farrell, 2011; Pennington & Richards, 2016), the teaching context (Fenwick & Cooper, 2013; Rivera Cuayahuitl & Pérez Carranza, 2015), curricula and resources in their workplace (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2006; Burton, 1998; Unsworth, 2001).

1.5 Overview of the thesis

To guide the reader, below is an overview of the nine chapters that comprise this dissertation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the topic of visual literacy, positioning this within the field of adult ELT in Australia. The background of the study, key areas of the research, research questions, aims and significance are articulated. To contextualise the study, six main topics are discussed: 1) the concept of visual literacy; 2) visual literacy across the stages of schooling in Australian education; 3) the two major phenomena that have transformed adult ELT in Australia – the internationalisation of Australian education and the global migration into the country (Bundensen, 2011); 4) key distinctions between Government-funded English language programs for adult migrants and refugees, and ELICOS programs; 5) the presence of visual literacy in adult ELT; and 6) economical views that frame adult ELT in Australia.

Chapter 2: Review of the literature: Theorising visual literacy

Chapter 2 examines the concept of visual literacy. Beginning with an examination of the meaning of literacy and how its interpretations have evolved, the chapter draws on key concepts of the field known as Literacy Studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1999; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993) to build the theoretical grounding for the study. The chapter situates the notions of text and visual texts as socially situated within a Multiliteracies/multimodality framework and explores the shift from an exclusive focus on the written word to recognising the significance of the image (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Lankshear, 2003; Nixon & Kerin, 2012). Green's (1998, 2012) 3D model of literacy and Callow's (2005) subsequent model of three dimensions of viewing are presented as a lens to contextualise and analyse understandings of both visual literacy and engagement with visual texts.

The chapter also explores Cultural Studies (Barker, 2012; Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997; Hall, 1990; Lewis, 2011) as contributing to the study's theoretical grounding. It examines links between the notions of text, culture, representation and language, as well as the concepts of visual language and visual culture, which are key to understanding visual literacy. It explains the rationale behind using the term 'visual texts' throughout this dissertation to refer to diverse types of images. Understanding these concepts at the core of Cultural Studies facilitates the investigation of different ways in which visual literacy has been conceptualised and applied across disciplines and over time. The chapter concludes with unpacking a contemporary definition of visual literacy and the notion of visual literacy standards.

Chapter 3: Review of the literature: Adult ELT

Chapter 3 explores literature on intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence educators in the adult ELT field, as a basis for seeking connections between these elements and the participating adult English language teachers' understandings of visual literacy. The areas examined are: teacher beliefs, teaching approaches, the purpose of ELT, the role of the educator, the teaching context, and key ideas about adult teaching and learning, including perceptions about contrasting student audiences. In the final section of the two literature review chapters (Chapters 2 and 3), I re-visit key concepts and theories stemming from the broad fields of Literacy Studies and Cultural Studies, which provide the theoretical grounding for this inquiry into visual literacy in adult ELT.

Chapter 4: Research design

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology used the study. It situates the qualitative research within an interpretivist paradigm, a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology. It details the rationale behind adopting a case study methodology with semi-structured interviews and focus groups as methods of data collection. The chapter also introduces Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Yenawine, 2014), a method used in the focus groups to engage participants in discussion about the images they chose in order to represent an idea. Also featured is a description of the stages of data collection, from design to implementation and participant selection, making reference to the benefits and limitations of each of the methods used, as well as their trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a discussion about why and how the thematic data analysis was implemented, employing concepts explored in the literature to inspect themes emerging from both interviews and focus groups data.

Chapter 5: Findings Part I: Teachers' conceptualisations of visual literacy

This is the first of three findings chapters, which are conceived as parallel and interrelated, yet presented sequentially to address the key concepts arising from the data. Chapter 5 examines the participants' conceptualisations of 'visual literacy' in their professional ELT context. The subsequent two chapters delve in to the participating teachers' description of their classroom practices in relation to the use of visual texts, and the beliefs that shaped their understandings of visual literacy and the use of visual texts in their pedagogies, respectively. Throughout the three chapters I analyse the participants' views, opinions and accounts of experiences and practices through the lens of Green's 3D model of literacy (1988, 2012b) and Callow's (2005) affective dimension, weaving together data gathered from their answers to the individual interview questions and their discussion about their focus groups visual representations.

Chapter 5 explores the participants' understanding of literacy, which provides insight into how a primary concern for the development of reading and writing as key literacy skills still prevailed as their main goal as English language teachers, and reflects on the ways they described their views on visual literacy. Interview data suggest that by talking about visual literacy the participants seemed to become much more aware and cognisant about it during the discussion, which allowed them to elaborate on views such as visual literacy as 'reading', 'decoding' and 'translating' images, as well as 'understanding the world'.

Chapter 6: Findings Part II: Self-reported classroom practices

Chapter 6 examines the participating teachers' self-reported classroom practices that include the use of visual texts. Their views on the role visual texts play in adult ELT label these as supporting devices for the development of traditional literacy skills and as being used preliminary to written or spoken texts. Data also reveal the criteria the teachers considered in their visual text selection process, which included sensitivity to their learners' socio-cultural backgrounds, relevance to the different learners' needs, teachers' pedagogical purposes, clarity and accessibility. Following this discussion about visual text selection, the participants' views are crystallised in focus group data derived from their interpretation of the photographs they selected as a device to represent a concept with a visual text and whether this would be suitable for their language teaching practice. The data also suggest that while adult English language learners are exposed to visual texts in the classroom, they have little or no opportunity to produce visual texts. Furthermore, the chapter explores how the participating teachers interpreted their students' reactions to and understanding of visual texts.

Chapter 7: Findings Part III: What shapes adult English language teachers' understandings and practices in relation to visual literacy?

Chapter 7 explores various aspects of adult ELT that influence the study participants' understanding of visual literacy and their related classroom practices. The data show that although the participating teachers' formal pre-service education and professional development did not explicitly address visual literacy, they do rely on visual texts to support their students' development of reading, writing and speaking skills. Furthermore, the chapter examines the participants' disposition for using visual texts in their teaching. In addition, their accounts of their experiences interacting with different technologies, how available these were in their workplaces, and in what ways access to technology resources influenced their practices, are explored.

Chapter 8: Discussion

Chapter 8 unpacks the story emerging from the data, scrutinises the findings in light of the research questions, makes connections to the theoretical frame employed and existing literature, and articulates in what ways this research extends current knowledge of visual literacy in the Australian adult ELT context. The discussion highlights the influence that factors typical of adult ELT had on the participating teachers, shaping their understandings of visual literacy and the role visual texts could play in their classroom practices. The chapter is divided into six sections: 1) Synopsis of key findings; 2) Adult English language teachers' understandings of visual literacy; 3) Elaborating visual literacy in teachers' pedagogies: talking *about* visual texts, not *with* visual texts; 4) Careful visual text selection; 5) Teachers' roles in their use of visual texts; and 6) Tenets of the adult ELT field. The discussion addresses how the participating adult English language teachers' understandings of visual literacy and their use of visual texts in the classroom seemed deeply rooted in their professional goal of promoting traditional literacy skills. The discussion also explores the participants' affective reactions to visual texts and how the educator's role as 'manager', 'acculturator' and 'professional' (Farrell, 2011) influenced how they incorporated visual texts in their pedagogies.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Chapter 9 foregrounds the importance of this work and its potential contributions to the discipline of adult ELT in Australia, via recommendations for positive changes in the field and suggestions for future research. It also addresses the study's limitations, reflecting on the research process, its scope and methodology.

1.6 Summary

In Chapter 1, I have introduced the concepts of visual literacy and adult ELT, contextualising this investigation within the two major areas in the adult ELT field in Australia: ELICOS and Government-funded English and literacy programs for adult migrants and refugees. I have provided a brief account of how the two sectors originated and evolved as a result of the internationalisation of Australian education and the global migration movements into the country since the mid twentieth century, respectively. I have explained the types of English language programs offered to these two contrasting student populations, identifying a disparity between visual literacy in the adult ELT field and the place it has within the primary and secondary school system.

After introducing the background of the study, I have explained my concern for the apparent issues of insufficient instruction on visual literacy in adult ELT and limited research on the subject in this field. I have explored links between these phenomena and the socio-political views on Australia's global competitiveness informing the current provision of adult language, literacy and numeracy education. I have argued the need to explore educators' understandings on visual literacy, so that they are able to facilitate the development of essential 21st century visual literacy skills in their adult English language learners. Building from this, I have articulated the three research questions underpinning the study.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THEORISING VISUAL LITERACY

In this chapter, I present the concepts and theories that inform the theoretical framework of the study, which has its foundations in the fields known as Literacy Studies and Cultural Studies. First, I introduce the notion of literacy, central to this research, and delve into how the concept has evolved. I explore foundational views of literacy presented by scholars in the field of Literacy Studies and how these approaches contributed to the idea of multiple socio-culturally situated literacy practices. The concepts examined include 'Multiliteracies', as articulated by The New London Group (1996), and 'multimodality' (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress, 2010; Unsworth, 2008), as a way of understanding and applying texts through different modes and in diverse contexts. Within this section, I argue the need for the study to adopt an expansive model to explore literacy, in order to explore particular questions about visual literacy. Thus, I examine Green's 3D model of literacy (1988, 2012b) and also highlight synergies between this approach and Callow's (2005) three dimensions of viewing.

Following the discussion on literacy and Literacy Studies, I explore principles of Cultural Studies, in order to foreground the links between literacy, culture and language, with emphasis on visual culture and visual language. In the final section of the chapter, I review a range of perspectives on visual literacy and address the limited research on this subject specific to adult ELT in Australia. The review includes a contemporary theoretical study of visual literacy, which examines a number of definitions proposed by scholars in the field over the past few decades. To conclude, I explain the notion of literacy standards, and how knowledge of these may contribute to better understanding the role that visual literacy plays in adult ELT.

2.1 Understandings of literacy

The term literacy is highly contested, and understandings of it have shifted and evolved over time. To begin with, until the mid-twentieth century, scholars referred to literacy from a psychological perspective as a set of tangible functional and mechanical skills, predominantly related to the cognitive abilities of reading and writing. These were considered a universal set of skills applicable across all social and cultural contexts resulting in generally uniform effects (Goody, 1999; Street, 1984). A literate person was therefore someone who was able to read a printed text and write out answers that explained their understanding of such text (Barton, 2007; Cole & Pullen, 2010). This model of reading comprehension has long dominated approaches to testing someone's basic literacy skills (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). Furthermore, to this day, comprehension exercises appear to remain prominent in language and literacy teaching (Harmer, 2013). This approach resonates with the

language used to describe assessment tasks in curricula and syllabi documents in institutions dedicated to adult ELT.

Understanding literacy as a set of cognitive skills has been linked to the opposite term 'illiteracy'. The binary 'literacy versus illiteracy' is contentious, as the two terms can be seen as categorising people into educational haves and have-nots, labelling the latter as having a problem (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009). Similarly, the antonym to 'literate' – 'illiterate' – has been traditionally seen as a derogative term, commonly associated with lower or disadvantaged classes (Blake & Blake, 2002). Contrasting this seemingly deficit approach is the evidence of complex local, everyday community literacy activity, which exists even in remote and often disadvantaged populations around the globe. The misconception of such communities as 'illiterate, backward villagers' (Street, 2009a, p. 22) signals the need for alternative and less contentious terms – such as 'nonliterate' or 'preliterate' (Blake & Blake, 2002). These terms are used to describe people who are unable to read or write, but do not necessarily imply that such individuals are rudimentary or unsophisticated. Currently, in the context of literacy and language teaching for adult migrants and refugees in Australia, individuals who have had no prior exposure to English are generally referred to as preliterate learners (Abbott, Rossiter, & Hatami, 2015).

Acknowledgement that literacy exists in societies in which reading and writing are not necessarily the core of exchange and communication between people suggests that there are other ways of thinking about literacy. A shift from perceiving literacy as a singular concept and a set of decontextualised skills (Street, 2009a), to viewing it as a social practice, became evident in the mid-1980s. At that time a number of scholars began placing more emphasis on the society in which a person operates and literacy occurs, rather than focusing on the psychological processes involved in how an individual acquires literacy skills (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012).

Authors credited with looking at literacy in everyday life, and whose work has been considered pivotal in understanding how the concept has been rethought, include Heath (1983), Scribner and Cole (1981) and Street (1984). Taking into account the rapidly changing social environments in which learning and living occur, these and many other scholars associated with a new field which became known as New Literacy Studies, turned to exploring literacy as something that people do at school, in their homes, at work and in many other contexts in their everyday life. In the following section I explain how ideas generated within New Literacy Studies, now referred to as Literacy Studies, have contributed to shifting the discussion of literacy from centring on a psychological process to being inherently a socio-cultural practice.

2.2 Theoretical grounding: (New) Literacy Studies

The idea that literacy exists outside of the conventional tasks of reading and writing, and in other environments away from the school setting, was central to the interdisciplinary field of study called New Literacy Studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1999; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993). This field emerged in the mid-1980s drawing from a number of areas such as linguistics, social psychology, anthropology and education (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). New Literacy Studies scholars produced and shaped a body of work based on the socio-cultural perspective of literacy not as a singular object, but as a plural set of social practices. It is important to clarify here that the term New Literacy Studies should not be used interchangeably with the modern notion of 'new literacies' (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). In New Literacy Studies the word 'new' refers to the advent of a socio-cultural perspective. Meanwhile, new literacies is now a term frequently used in the field of literacy education to refer to new kinds of texts, practices, skills and understandings that have emerged with increased use and incidence of innovative digital technologies (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014).

Subscribing to the approach to literacy as multiple social practices, Scribner and Cole (1981) and Street (1984) argue that such practices happen in many different domains. This is a key insight within the field of New Literacy Studies. Literacy domains are particular spaces where literacy is practised often outside of the school context (Street, 1993). In this sense, domains can refer to a specific site, such as someone's home, their workplace, their place of worship and many others. Importantly, although the practices that occur in these spaces are socially situated, they are not exclusive to each domain. To explain the argument that different ways of being – social practices – can occur in more than one domain, scholars such as Pahl and Rowsell (2012), Scribner and Cole (1981) and Street (1993) assert that multiple identities manifest in different domains. Domains can be identified by how people behave in specific circumstances, their cultural views and their ways of seeing the world. For instance, the manner in which someone addresses their university lecturer in a formal letter would be very different to how they express their feelings in a greeting card to a friend or family member.

New Literacy Studies scholars identify three main elements within the notion of literacy domains: literacy events, literacy practices and social practices. The concept of literacy events facilitates understanding of literacies in various specific circumstances. Heath (1983) defines a literacy event as 'any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role' (p. 386). In other words, a literacy event is the occurrence or situation in which a person engages, regardless of whether this happens in or out of a school setting. Literacy practices are then realised in literacy events. For example, a literacy event may constitute composing a text –

any type of text – and the literacy practice is related to the action of reading (words or images) and writing. In terms of a social practice, Scribner and Cole (1981, p. 236) define it as ‘a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge’ to produce and disseminate information, always constituted within a social context (e.g., with people, social groupings). Thus, the social practice encompasses the message communicated, as well as a person’s reason for engaging in the practice, and their awareness of the context and their audience.

The approach to understanding literacy within literacy domains encompassing literacy events, literacy practices and social practices, considers how people make meaning in a diversity of contexts informed by their cultural beliefs or views of the world, rather than simply employing a set of decontextualised cognitive skills (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993). Correspondingly, the field of New Literacy Studies has expanded to reflect that literacy encompasses the use of technological advances that were once ‘new’ and are now an integral component of language and communication in multiple contexts. Therefore, in an effort to extend the limits on understandings of literacy and inform future research, the multidisciplinary field is now referred to as ‘Literacy Studies’ (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009). This perspective informed this study.

To further explore the idea of literacies as multiple social practices, and to examine texts as diverse and evolving, in the following section, I discuss the notion of ‘Multiliteracies’ – as proposed by The New London Group (1996). I explain how the emergence of multiple communication channels has contributed to broadening conceptualisations of literacy beyond traditional approaches based on written language, and has led to the conceptualisation of ‘multimodality’ (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress, 2000; Unsworth, 2008; Walsh, 2010). Grounding this discussion, I consider the idea of text as more complex and multi-layered than in its traditional printed form.

2.2.1 Multiliteracies and text

The advancement of visual and technological innovation has resulted in the emergence of new ways in which people access information and mobilise knowledge. Diverse approaches to communication through various technologies continue to influence current educational discourse. The New London Group (1996) introduced the term ‘Multiliteracies’ to encapsulate two central areas of discussion: ‘the multiplicity of channels and media . . . [and] the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity’ (p. 6). This group of scholars was concerned with better understanding the social outcomes of language learning, in order to reconsider the principles of traditional literacy pedagogy and reshape the ways in which school practices provide the skills needed by learners to succeed in diverse socio-

cultural contexts. They sought to overcome ‘the limitations of traditional approaches [to literacy] by emphasising how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic and private lives of the students’ (The New London Group, 1996, p. 1).

In contrast to the traditional view in which literacy pedagogy consists of ‘teaching and learning to read and write in page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language’ (The New London Group, 1996, p. 1), the pedagogy of Multiliteracies considers texts as multiple, and explores the different forms of texts present in languages used by people in diverse contexts, such as within family, at work and in the broader community. Notwithstanding the New London Group’s efforts to re-define texts as more than written works, traditional views on text persist. Conceptualisations of text have been central to extensive debate in philosophy, literacy, literature and anthropology over time (Collins, 2003). Historically, the notion has been grounded in philology and literature (Wilson, 2012), and defined as a particular unit of meaning, which is formed by sequences of morphemes and lexemes (Ifversen, 2003). In other words, a text was originally understood as a linguistic structure of words, phrases, lines and sentences produced by a person to communicate a message and with an audience in mind.

The view of texts as grammatically structured literary works remains pervasive in approaches to language and literacy education in which the successful application of reading and writing skills might be the fundamental goal. However, beyond the bounds of a purely linguistic definition, texts are now often seen as social and historical inventions, which encapsulate the views of various different groups of people (Gee, 2001). From this perspective, people not only read and write texts, but also present attitudes toward a text in a social setting, and exhibit values and beliefs related to it. Furthermore, taking into account the different contexts in which texts are produced and consumed, these can be seen as socially constructed artefacts (Wilson, 2012).

Texts as social objects or artefacts take multiple forms and are communicated through a variety of media (Ifversen, 2003). For people to engage with texts via different media (e.g., a hand-written note on a piece of paper or a photograph displayed through the most sophisticated digital technologies) they require different literacies, including print-based literacy, digital literacy and visual literacy (Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013; Jones & Hafner, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Messaris, 2012; Schlosser, 2010). In this process, which is at the centre of pedagogies based on Multiliteracies theory, learners are positioned not only as consumers of texts but also as agents in the creation of texts; that

is, they are producers of knowledge (Iyer & Luke, 2010). The nature of today's world, which increasingly relies on multimedia, contributes to this perspective, which fosters the critical use of words, sounds and images as part of engaging in effective communication (Kalantzis & Cope, 2014; Unsworth, 2008).

2.2.2 Visual texts

Several scholars have contributed to the discussion of images as texts. For instance, Jordan (2006, p. 1) uses the term 'visual text' to describe 'thematic graphics used to make an argument in lieu of written language alone'. This succinct but compelling definition suggests connections to the idea of images as comparable contributors to comprehension and understanding, in relation to written texts. Levstik and Barton (1996) contend that a visual text is a valuable resource in education, as it can capture 'a moment in time' (p. 536). In other words, visual texts provide opportunities for learners to construct meaning through the practice of bringing together fragments of visual information gathered through different experiences. Furthermore, visual texts can be very helpful in the development of teachers' and learners' narrative structures, in order to facilitate the transmission of values and ideologies (Quin, McMahon, & Quin, 1995).

Quin, et al.'s (1995) argument suggests that the development of visual literacy skills should be an essential element of the curriculum to ensure learning in all educational settings. However, they offer a word of caution, stating that when using visual texts in the classroom, teachers should: 'clarify their purposes for viewing; target limited aspects or skills when using visual texts; acknowledge and value student knowledge and preferences; and be mindful of students with special needs' (Quin et al., 1995, p. 3). The authors believe that the use of visual texts should be driven by learning objectives and the specific student cohort who views it. Nichols (2012) adds to this idea, suggesting that the use of visual texts in education 'can allow for individuals to directly experience phenomena and leaves to the observer the task of naming the significance' (p. 48). From this point of view, the use of visual texts in educational settings contributes to developing learners' abilities to mediate efficiently information from sources other than written or spoken texts, and to interpret and generate new meanings.

In a study of the role of visual texts in the teaching of history, Nichols (2012) differentiates between two broad categories: 'static visual texts' and 'dynamic visual texts'. He explains that static visual texts are defined at the time of their creation, that is, ideas develop into a design that is materialised at the time the text is produced. Once the design is represented visually, it is meant to remain the same. This is of course, subject to the environmental conditions in which a static visual text (e.g., a painting) is

conserved, transported and displayed. There are many types within the broad classification of static visual texts. For instance, Lohse, Biolsi, Walker, and Rueter (1994) developed what they called a 'typology of visual representations' (p. 48), as they explored how different types of visual texts communicate knowledge. The resulting eleven categories of visual representations based on specific scales of characteristics (e.g., concrete/abstract, spatial/non-spatial) were: 'graphs, tables, graphical tables, time charts, networks, structure diagrams, process diagrams, maps, cartograms, icons and pictures' (Lohse et al., 1994, p. 48). Nichols (2012) employs these categories to illustrate what constitutes static visual texts, and takes the notion of diagrams further, to include within this category photo-realistic representations, such as paintings and lithographs.

In terms of dynamic visual texts, this notion has been historically associated with films and videos, which display moving images (Nichols, 2012). Gaudelli and Siegel (2010) consider the practice of including dynamic visual texts in education more advantageous than using static visual texts, suggesting that film invites viewers to 'play, interact and dialogue' (p.583). This view refers to the fluidity of form that the moving image presents, and thus the potential opportunities for a wider array of sensory experiences in which consumers may engage, in comparison to static visual texts. In the specific ELT realm, Donaghy and Xerri (2017) argue that film and video, as well as television content, are popular among educators and have now become integral to classroom practice.

Regarding the speed of communication, visual texts are considered to provide an immediacy that written words may not (Nichols, 2012). This idea is particularly evident in a time where the practice of digital 'photos sharing' (Humphrey, 2016) has become an increasingly popular method for people to make their personal life experiences public. As a case in point, with over 800million active monthly users (CNBC, 2018), the social networking site 'Instagram' is a fast, mobile and easily accessible way to communicate almost entirely through photographs (Humphrey, 2016; Jackson & Luchner, 2018). Consistent with how static visual texts like photographs can be produced, accessed and disseminated digitally, dynamic visual texts can include sophisticated moving images produced and displayed digitally, in particular via the Internet (Erwig, Smeltzer, & Wang, 2017; Pantaleo, 2015; Wasilewska, 2017; Williams, 2016). An example of these modern visual texts are computer-mediated video games, which are considered a useful pedagogical tool to assist in the development of problem solving and critical thinking skills (Beavis, 2012; Gee, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Loftus, Tiernan, & Cherian, 2014; Marcon, 2013).

Taking a detour from the above mentioned views, which suggest that visual texts are man-made, I would like to bring attention to the use of body language for the purpose of meaning making. Kress (2017, p. ix) argues that ‘speech occurs jointly with ensembles of gesture, posture, gaze, movement’. Indeed, gestures could be considered the first and most elemental forms of visual texts an individual engages with, since regardless of age, socio-cultural background or geographic location, people gesture when they speak. Hand and body movements and facial expressions are so pervasive that researchers across diverse fields (e.g., linguistics, psychology, education, the arts, science) have claimed that these form part of an integrated system of meaning, necessary for language production and comprehension (Kelly, Manning, & Rodak, 2008; Stam & Ishino, 2011). In fact, scholars such as Krauss, Chen, and Chawla (1996) and Zeki (2009) have dedicated their efforts to understanding what is commonly described as ‘non-verbal communication’, which also includes other bodily experiences, such as eye contact. In the context of education, such research has been applied in studies exploring early literacy (Valenzeno, Alibali, & Klatzky, 2003), second language acquisition (Gullberg, 2006) and classroom management (Zeki, 2009), among many other areas.

The examples of static and dynamic visual texts outlined above illustrate the diverse array of visual resources that educators in many disciplines employ in their pedagogies. Henceforth in this thesis, I will use the term ‘visual texts’ to refer to *all* types of images (two- or three-dimensional), including still (e.g., pictures, drawings, signs, sculptures) and moving images (e.g., film, videogames), natural (e.g., gestures) or man-made, which adult English language teachers incorporate in their classroom practices to convey meaning. In the next section, I explore the notion of ‘multimodality’ to explain how the visual is one of the multiple modes through which people can find, access, assemble, link and communicate information.

2.2.3 Multimodality

The fact that in today’s society texts can be produced and consumed via a diversity of media and through the use of a combination of the senses (Pantaleo, 2015) places visual texts within the realm of ‘multimodality’. Multimodality refers to the ways in which people can make meaning not exclusively by print-based reading and writing, but through various modes of representation (Callow, 2011; Iyer & Luke, 2010; Kress, 2010; Walsh, 2010). The New London Group (1996) describes modes of representation as ‘design categories’, which people use to express themselves and make meaning of the information they access through the senses. The New London Group outlines six design categories or modes involved in meaning making. These are: ‘linguistic (language in cultural settings), visual (images), audio (sounds), gestural (movement), spatial (space and place) and multimodal (relates to

all the above)' (p. 65). Anstey and Bull (2010) refer to modes of representation as 'semiotic systems', and explain that a multimodal text must incorporate more than one semiotic system. In the context of language and literacy learning, multimodal texts afford learners from diverse language and socio-cultural backgrounds an array of platforms to construct meaning (Ajayi, 2009).

Educators increasingly employ multimodal texts to support understanding of a subject matter and tap into the many literacies students use in their everyday practices (Cloonan, 2010). For instance, the use of film is extremely popular among teachers and students (Hafner, 2014; Nichols, 2012). The fact that this type of visual text often incorporates various modes of representation (still and moving images, sounds) makes it quintessentially multimodal, as it allows for the viewer to make connections with memories, emotions and existing knowledge. Importantly, in order to effectively engage with multimodal texts, learners must draw upon their social and cultural world experiences (Iyer & Luke, 2010), which inform both school-based and out-of-classroom literacy practices (Boche & Henning, 2015; Iyer & Luke, 2010). Furthermore, in order to integrate multimodal texts into classroom practice, teachers need to understand a text's purpose, the student audience and the most suitable method of communication. In addition, they need to know the specialised terminology that describes how a specific multimodal text conveys meaning. This means that educators need to have command of the conventions of each of the six modes of representation or semiotic systems, so that they can employ these in their pedagogies to communicate their messages (Anstey & Bull, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

Multimodal pedagogies take advantage of the emerging variety of text forms associated with modern technologies in increasingly diverse and globalised societies (Daly & Unsworth, 2011; Hafner, 2014; Unsworth, 2001). Such pedagogies facilitate understanding of how different modalities interact in a text to independently and collectively construct different dimensions of meaning. From a Multiliteracies viewpoint, in the adult ELT classroom, understanding visual texts as isolated from other types of texts, seems implausible. Language and literacy learning often incorporates a broad range of texts, including spoken and written words, photographs, music, interactive websites, film, videogames, text-messaging – to name a few – and the use of online social channels and other media (Boche & Henning, 2015; Callow, 2011; de Silva Joyce, 2014; Hafner, 2014; Oskoz & Elola, 2016). Thus, Thorne and Black (2007) argue that for individuals to be fully competent in second and additional language(s), they must be able to proficiently and meaningfully engage with multimodal texts through internet mediation and digital forms of communication. Correspondingly, the body of work which explores multimodal composing in the realm of language learning continues to expand (Hafner, 2014),

contributing to the development of new pedagogies which take into account the affordances provided by the variety of text forms associated with digital technologies.

2.2.4 A lens for understanding literacy: Green's 3D model

In light of the complexities involved in defining literacy and related concepts, and given that how the notion is interpreted is relative to different contexts, using 'models' of understanding can help researchers and educators articulate and apply perspectives on literacy (Snyder & Beale, 2012). A model acts as the lens to explore and expand existing conceptualisations, understand gaps left by statements about literacy, which may lack a theoretical premise, and distinguish the differences and similarities between contrasting approaches to the topic (Street, 1993). In essence, examining a model's key definitions and the ways in which it positions interrelated concepts, facilitates alternative approaches to exploring particular questions about literacy.

A model that has strongly influenced literacy research in the past three decades was developed by Bill Green in 1988, with an initial focus on writing literacy in school contexts. Green (1988) proposed a three-dimensional model of literacy to provide 'a way to understand the multidimensionality of literacy in subject-specific areas, with respect to writing, curriculum and pedagogy' (Green & Beavis, 2012, p. XV). This representation of literacy is illustrated as three connected circles that portray three dimensions – the 'operational', 'cultural' and 'critical' (Durrant & Green, 2000), indicating that there is no hierarchy and they are inter-dependent and interrelated (see Figure 1).

The 3D model responded to the increasing 'technologisation' of literacy (Green, 1999), offering a framework for educators to address both the advantages and challenges attached to emerging technologies, and to assess related literacy programs in the school system. Green (1999, p. 42) suggested that the model could serve as an approach to literacy as 'an articulation of language and technology', and argued that when it came to technologies, simply learning how to use them was not enough. Instead, the process of learning and using new technologies should be enriched by social and cultural criticism.

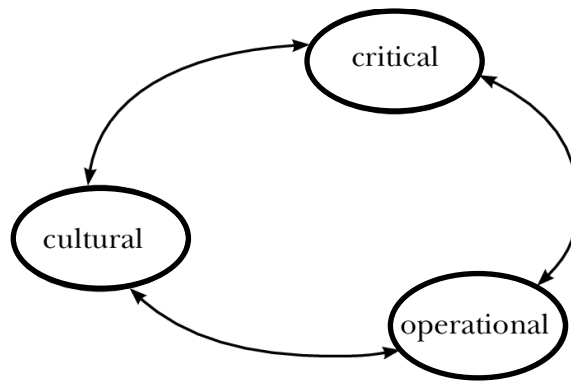


Figure 1. The 3D model of literacy

Adapted from Durrant and Green, 2000, "Literacy and the new technologies in school education: Meeting the l(IT)eracy challenge?" *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 23(2), p. 98.

Although the model was first conceived with classroom settings in mind (Green, 1988), it was later revised and applied to support the idea of literacy as ubiquitous in a multiplicity of practices within broader socio-cultural contexts. Green (1999) explains:

The operational refers to turning 'it' on, knowing what to do to make 'it' work; the cultural involves using 'it' to do something meaningful and effective, in particular situations and circumstances (for example, a Geography lesson, a workplace, etc.); and the critical entails recognising and acknowledging that all social practices and their meaning systems are partial and selective and shaped by power relations (Green, 1999, p. 43).

This account of the model frames literacy as a collaboration between social practices, and offers a richer and more holistic alternative to traditional cognitive skills-oriented perspectives of literacy. The 'operational' dimension refers here to the technical aspects of using language and knowledge of how it functions. It involves being competent in the language system(s) in order to be able to actively participate in a literacy event (Green, 2012b). The 'cultural' dimension addresses meaning making, based on knowledge and contextual understandings of texts and their culturally-situated meanings (Green, 2012b). In other words, literacy acts and events are specific to the context and subject to the specialised content and language used in any given situation. In this sense, 'learning language involves learning culture – that is, being socialised into the culture . . . Conversely, to learn culture and to become an effective, functioning participant in the culture, involves learning the language and becoming competent with regard to using it as a resource for meaning' (Green, 2012b, p. 5). This understanding suggests that there is an interdependent relationship between the operational and the

cultural dimension of literacy. 'The two are bound together necessarily in a reciprocal, mutually enriching relationship' (Green, 2012b, p. 6).

The 'critical' dimension of literacy is about empowering an individual to transform and actively produce the culture in which they live. It is concerned with the power associated with being able to assess and critique a text and understand its purpose (Green, 2012b). Green explains that an individual's critical stance enables them to reflect on what is being taught and 'to take an active role in the production of meaning' (Green, 2012b, p. 8); that is, to make informed decisions regarding their own learning. Knowledge construction involves critically engaging with and analysing information. These processes rely on the socio-cultural and technical aspects of learning, which signal the interdependent relationship between the critical dimension of literacy and the operational and the cultural dimensions (Green, 2002). The reciprocal connection between the three dimensions is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

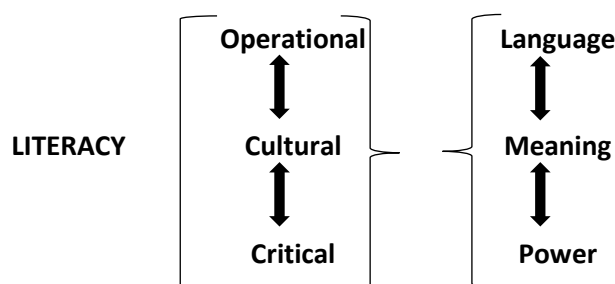


Figure 2. The tri-stratal nature of the 3D model
Adapted from Green, 2002, "A literacy project of our own?" *English in Australia*, 134, p. 27.

It is important to stress that this 'critical-holistic, integrated view of literacy in practice and in pedagogy addresses all three [dimensions] simultaneously; none has any necessary priority, practically, over either of the others' (Green, 2012a, p. 25). According to the 3D model, in the complex process of literacy learning, the 'operational', the 'cultural' and the 'critical' dimensions are seen as possessing equal status (Scull, Nolan, & Raban, 2013). Thus, compartmentalising them should not be a goal of using the model. In essence, although the model conceives the three dimensions as independent, and thus they can be analysed separately for conceptual and pedagogical purposes, they inherently overlap and intersect. At any given time within literacy practices, the 'operational' dimension involves questioning how people engage with texts of various kinds and how they learn to use them. The 'cultural' dimension is concerned with understanding a text while thinking about prior knowledge and

connections to this and other texts, and the contexts in which these are produced/consumed. The 'critical' dimension considers a person's particular views about a text and the attitudes and beliefs attached to such views, which, in turn, generate certain reactions to the text.

Since the inception of the 3D model (Green, 1988), scholars across a range of disciplines, particularly in education, have found it to be an effective lens for understanding diverse literacies within social practices (Durrant & Green, 2000; Faulkner, Ocean, & Jordan, 2012; Lankshear et al., 1997; Nixon & Kerin, 2012; Scull et al., 2013; Tour, 2010). For instance, Tour (2010) used the model to examine technoliteracy in the ESL classroom. She argues that 'by considering literacy, technology, different sociocultural contexts and their complex relationships together, the model offers opportunities to obtain holistic and in-depth perspectives on practices with technology' (p. 150). Analysis of technoliteracy practices using Green's model positions technology as integral to ESL student practices and not simply as a tool, and suggests that technology use in foreign socio-cultural and linguistic environments can be challenging for the learner.

Other scholars who have applied Green's 3D model include Faulkner et al. (2012) and Scull et al. (2013). Faulkner et al. used the model as the underlying theoretical framework to design a core subject called *Designing Multiliteracies* within a pre-service secondary school teacher education program. They used the 3D model to foster pre-service teachers' thinking about literacy, information technology and numeracy as integrated aspects of learning. The authors concluded that Green's 3D model enabled them to 'conceptualise learning processes as non-linear' (Faulkner et al., 2012, p. 126) and to help teachers' focus move from proficiency to engaging with changing practices. Scull et al. (2013) employed the 3D model as a framework to inform preschool teachers' practices. They argued that the presence of the operational, cultural and critical dimensions in early childhood programs could assist in providing opportunities for richer, more purposeful literacy experiences for young children.

2.2.5 Applying the 3D model to viewing visual texts

Another example of how Green's 3D model (1988) has been applied in educational contexts, which is used in this study to contribute to understanding the process of engaging with and making meaning from visual texts, is Callow's (2005) 3D model of viewing. Informed by Green's three-dimensional model of literacy, and inspired by the opportunities to work with a broad range of graphic novels, picture books and multimedia stories afforded by the new Australian English curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2015), Callow (2005) represented his model as being a lens to explore different dimensions involved in learning. Seeking a broader understanding

of how different literacy practices might intersect and influence each other, Callow also employed the idea of three dimensions that interplay and overlap (Green, 1988, 2012b) to offer a view of how people's interaction with visual texts is also a complex and cyclical process. He proposed three dimensions specifically for viewing visual texts: the 'affective', the 'compositional' and the 'critical' (see Figure 3).

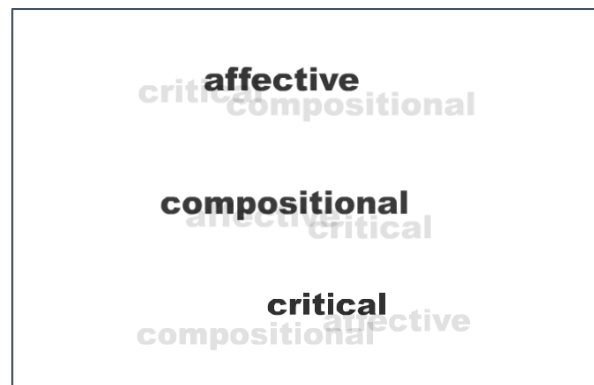


Figure 3. The three dimensions of viewing

Adapted from Callow, 2005, "Literacy and the visual: Broadening our vision", *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 4(1), p. 14.

In Callow's model, the 'affective' dimension focuses on the unique role the individual plays when interacting with visual texts, and their responding to them. A person's reactions to the visual include 'the sensual and immediate response, the aesthetic appreciation, the hermeneutic comprehension and the creative choices in both the viewing and creating of visual objects' (Callow, 2005, p. 13). The second dimension – the 'compositional' – is concerned with how a visual text is designed, structured and placed within a particular context, and how as a result, this composition elicits meaning in the viewer. This dimension is concerned with the form and style of a visual text; that is, the visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) that constructs it. Finally, the 'critical' dimension brings 'sociocritical critique' (p. 13) into the process of understanding visual texts, based on the premise that these are never neutral and that they provoke diverse explicit and tacit reactions and thus the discourses people choose to employ to describe visual texts (Callow, 2005).

Not surprisingly, when juxtaposing Green's (1988, 2012b) and Callow's (2005) 3D models, intersections emerge. Green's cultural dimension comprises people's understandings of texts based on prior knowledge and experience, as well as socio-cultural aspects specific of different contexts

(Green, 2012b). To Callow, meaning-making from visual texts is also tied to the specific context in which these are viewed. However, in his model, he frames the meaning-making process within the critical dimension. Callow's critical dimension incorporates an individual's socio-critical stance toward a visual text. Similarly, Green's critical dimension encompasses an individual's ability to adopt an active and transformative role in the culture in which they live. Both views of the critical dimension foreground the element of power in understanding and producing texts. Regarding the operational, although Callow does not overtly include this dimension in his model, he does assert how the affective dimension informs the decisions a person makes in order to create a visual text. These affective elements are related to confidence or attitudes and feelings toward operational aspects.

Importantly, in terms of Callow's affective dimension, this may be perceived as inherent to all other dimensions of literacy, as it deals with what people 'feel' upon their viewing of visual texts. Scholars such as Arnold (2007), Cole (2012), Deleuze (1995) and Habrat (2013) include within the affective domain of learning personal traits, quality of interactions, attitudes and mindsets present in a classroom (both in teachers and students), and argue that such elements may enhance or hinder learning. According to Deleuze (1995), 'affect' in education is what makes relationships happen between learning and practice. Such is the case when learners may find the use of a visual text in a classroom practice extremely dull or perhaps threatening and choose not to engage, despite their ability to do so. Conversely, at other times, the same students may find the environment developed through teacher activities particularly interesting and unexpectedly act upon their desire to learn and communicate.

Indeed, affect plays a significant part in how people engage with and react to a visual text in different situations (Cole, 2012; Scribner & Cole, 1981). Thus, Callow (2005) highlights the importance of overtly acknowledging all aspects of visual texts in the classroom – the affective, the compositional and the critical. This approach is in line with Green's (1988) multidimensional view of engaging with texts. From the onset of his model of literacy, Green maintained the importance of treating the three dimensions with equal hierarchy in literacy teaching. He argues that although teachers might be instinctively aware of how using picture books, artworks or multimedia may raise personal affective reactions, consciously implementing educational experiences across the three dimensions can generate complex and rich literacy learning experiences.

As the above discussion attests, constructs explored within the field of Literacy Studies contribute to the theoretical grounding in this study. Literacy Studies and its focus on literacy as socially-

contextualised practices provide theoretical resources that might help me understand Adult English language teachers' conceptualisations of visual literacy. Notions such as Multiliteracies, multimodality and visual text guide this research. Furthermore, I judged that my understanding of Green's (1988, 2012b) 3D model of literacy and Callow's (2005) affective dimension of viewing would help me make sense of how the participating teachers articulated their perspectives on visual literacy and reported applying them in their use of visual texts in their classroom practices. In the next section of this chapter, I explore another major theoretical approach grounding this study – Cultural Studies.

2.3 Theoretical grounding: Cultural Studies

The notion of literacy as multiple socially-situated practices (Barton, 2007; Street, 1993, 2009a), together with Green's (1988, 2012b) perspective of the three dimensions of literacy, highlights the concept of culture as a crucial element in a holistic view of literacy. In this section, I examine the interrelated notions of culture, representation and language (Hall, 1990), central to the multidisciplinary field of inquiry known as Culture Studies. Scholars in this field, congruent with those who promote socio-cultural views of literacy, conceptualise culture as multiple and virtually omnipresent in all aspects of society, and as vital in shaping literacy practices (Barker, 2012; Du Gay et al., 1997; Hall, Chen, & Morley, 1996; Lewis, 2011; Lister & Wells, 2001). Within this discussion, I describe how language is conceptualised, and explain visual language, an essential concept in the context of this study of visual literacy in adult language and literacy learning.

Stuart Hall – reported as the most significant figure in the development of British Cultural Studies (Morley & Chen, 1996) – describes the discipline as 'a discursive formation of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society' (Hall, 1996, p. 6). The emergence of this distinctive field was largely influenced by the expansion of social theory and the social sciences – in particular anthropology and sociology – which provided the foundations for scholars from diverse disciplines to draw on their expertise to examine culture, language and power (Lewis, 2011). Since the 1960s, with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University broadly considered the field's birthplace (Barker, 2012), scholars in the field have investigated the relationship between many concepts that represent forms of power in society and the values, beliefs, competencies and customs attached to these, as well as the practices and institutions that frame them (Barker, 2012; Du Gay et al., 1997; Hall, 1990; Lewis, 2011)

The study of the role of power within culture has inspired a body of theoretical work that considers knowledge a political practice and a conduit for change (Barker, 2012). The forms of power that Cultural Studies scholars examine include gender, race, class, religion and political persuasion (Bennett, 1998; Du Gay et al., 1997; Hall, 1980; Lewis, 2011). Cultural Studies subscribers develop ways of thinking about how these forms of power can be utilised by people seeking to transform culture and their society. Hall (1996) argues that this formation of ideas is the result of analysing culture, a process that consists of discovering how patterns in social practices work, as well as making sense of the relationships between them. The purpose of such analysis is to understand how people experience the interactions between these practices and patterns as a whole, and how they use this knowledge to be active agents in their culture.

In a similar fashion to Literacy Studies, Cultural Studies scholars have had different foci over time and their perspectives have shifted and expanded. While some Cultural Studies researchers have been concerned with the ethnography of the lived experiences of social groups and with the cultural norms that govern such people (Barker, 2012; Du Gay et al., 1997; Lewis, 2011), others have dedicated their efforts to examining the concept of ‘representation’ as a key component of communication through language across different cultures and societies (Hall, 1996, 2013). In the current networked world, contemporary Cultural Studies scholars are interested in understanding culture as they see it shaped by major widespread forms of media, while examining society in relation to the meaning-making processes that different people go through in their everyday social practices (Lewis, 2011). In the following section, I explore Cultural Studies scholars’ views on the notions of representation and language as central to culture, which I found relevant to this study of visual literacy in adult ELT.

2.3.1 Culture, representation and language

In order to understand social practices and connections between them, Cultural Studies examines the key concepts of culture, representation and language. Culture is ‘an assemblage of imaginings and meanings that may be consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous. These assemblages may operate through a wide variety of human groupings and social practices’ (Lewis, 2011, p. 15). Thus, culture is built upon ideas, beliefs and practices, and exists within human groupings, which may include family, neighbourhood, age group, race, profession and religion, to name a few. Furthermore, along with the beliefs, practices and traditions shared by the members of any specific society, culture encompasses their language(s) (Hall, 1990; Hall, 2013; Hall et al., 1996). From this perspective, culture includes the many individual and shared ways by which people see the

world, including what they do and the methods in which they communicate in everyday life, as well as how these elements come together in society.

The formation of social groupings and practices is critical to the creation of cultural meanings (Lewis, 2011). In other words, how different groups of people experience their surroundings, and the reactions they present toward these, help them define how they create and actively engage in culture. Therefore, culture depends on its participants understanding the events that take place around them, producing and exchanging meaning because they see the world in broadly similar ways. This process of making sense of the world, which can happen in countless different ways is referred to as 'representation' (Hall, 1996). Kalantzis and Cope (2012) define representation as the 'internalised narratives' (p. 177) that people make for themselves. That is, the unique stories that emerge in people's minds when they engage with a text through processes such as reading and viewing. People represent their understanding of the world through observing their own environment and people within it, to then articulate and communicate their concepts and ideas.

Cultural Studies scholars view representation as essential to understanding the world, as it involves 'the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language' (Hall, 2013, p. 3). This idea suggests that representation requires the ability to capture thoughts in a conceptual map; that is, an image in people's heads. Then, in order to communicate and share this image, the use of a common system of representation – a language – is required. In light of this, Cultural Studies places language at its heart, as it constitutes the means to organise, cluster, arrange and classify individual concepts (Hall, 2013).

Similar to how the concept of literacy has expanded, views on language have also evolved. Contemporary language research and practice see language as 'a way of thinking about the environment and . . . a way of acting in the environment, via the people in it' (Halliday, 2016, p. 4). This is a shift from understandings of language as purely a spoken or written method of human communication, which involves the use of words in a structured way (Chomsky, 2000). These arguments suggest that language serves not only the purpose of transferring information, but also enables people to engage in numerous actions and activities involved in taking different roles in society. Language assigns meaning to material objects and social practices (Gee, 1990, 2015).

Meaning in social practices is brought to light by language itself, and it is made understandable to people within the terms of a particular mode of representation. Importantly, language should not be

viewed as something general because there are specific varieties of language in different contexts (Gee, 2001) and language can manifest through different modes (Hall, 2013). In essence, the conduit for representation is language, and language can be materialised in written, spoken, visual, gestural, spatial and/or multimodal texts. In this study, language as representation of meaning through visual texts is of prime interest. Thus, below, I introduce the relevant concepts of ‘visual language(s)’ and ‘visual culture’.

2.3.2 Visual language(s)

The notion that language is central to the construction of culture (Du Gay et al., 1997; Gee, 1991; Halliday, 2016) has been key to the study of ‘visual language’. Visual language is considered an intrinsic part of living in a contemporary society where information is disseminated at the speed of light through mass media and more increasingly through visual texts (Arbuckle, 2004; Avgerinou, 2007; Britsch, 2012; Callow, 2007; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Wilson, 2010). Due to the pervasiveness of visual texts in contemporary society and across the globe, visual language is often misconstrued as ‘more universal’ than written language (Avgerinou, 2007), and is considered a more subjective cultural construction based in arbitrary conventions (Serafini, 2017). Thus, similar to the discussion around language and literacy, reaching an agreed all-encompassing definition of visual language has been a challenge.

Visual language has been historically discussed from two key viewpoints. On the one hand, it has been interpreted as the responses produced by viewers to explain information they access visually (Chang & Fu, 1980). That is, the viewer accesses visual information and produces responses via other media (e.g., written or spoken). In this sense – as confusing as it may sound – visual language can be what someone writes or says in response to a visual text they view. On the other hand, the language used to respond to information communicated via a visual text can be visual itself (Chang & Fu, 1980). From this perspective, visual language is a two-way method of communicating that employs both the process of decoding a visual text, as well as the production of visual texts. To understand the distinctions between these two approaches, it is necessary to elaborate on the different ways in which written and visual languages are constructed. Erwig et al. (2017) discriminate between what they call a ‘textual language’ (i.e. written language) and a visual language based on the following definition:

A textual language is a set of strings over an alphabet. The symbols of any sentence are only related to each other by a linear ordering. In contrast, a sentence of a visual language consists of a set of symbols that are, in general, related by several relationships (Erwig, 1998, p. 462).

This claim suggests that just as there are multiple languages based on systems of sounds (speech) or graphic symbols (writing), there are several visual languages, which are constructed by different types of images and are employed in various specialised fields. Visual texts form languages that act as systems of representation that classify, shape, and mediate our understandings of reality through various modalities and social practices (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Visual texts range from paintings and drawings to sophisticated graphs and digitally created animations. They also include gestures, body language, signs and symbols. Each type of visual text encompasses a system of representation and signification that enables people to produce and communicate thoughts and pictures about reality (Kazmierczak, 2001). Put simply, a visual text is 'any way of communicating that relies primarily on the visual sense for interpretation' (de Silva Joyce, 2014, p. 11). Importantly, the actions of comprehending a visual text and using it to engage in visual language originate in thought, rather than in the eye. Thus, visual texts are given meaning by the viewer through association with their previous knowledge (Erwig et al., 2017).

The following definition of visual language aligns with my aim to explore visual language from the point of view of an adult English language teacher:

[Visual language is] a pictorial representation of conceptual entities and operations and is essentially a tool through which users compose visual sentences. [...] In a broader sense, visual languages refer to any kinds [of] non textual but visible human communication medias, including art, images, sign languages, maps, and charts, to name a few (Zhang, 2007, p. 4).

From Zhang's (2007) standpoint, visual language is not limited to the representation or dissemination of visual messages via modern technologies, which is often a pedagogical practice in contemporary educational settings (Brumberger, 2011; Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013; Messaris, 2012). Rather, this definition allows people to broadly conceptualise visual language as a means of communication that includes visual texts as simple as a hand gesture, to the most complex of digital creations.

Another perspective that contributes to conceptualising visual language in this study was proposed by Avgerinou and Pettersson (2011), who break down the following key features: '1) Visual language exists; 2) Visual language is holistic; 3) Visual language must be learned; 4) Visual language may improve learning; 5) Visual language is not universal; 6) Visual language often needs verbal support' (pp. 5-6). These features were the result of an investigation that Avgerinou (2007) conducted with people with graduate level education in mind. Her study aimed at determining whether university graduates of various disciplines can become visually literate without having received systematic visual literacy training. She found that, although the participants had unconsciously developed a degree of

visual literacy skills, these had not been sufficient to equip them as fully functioning members of a contemporary visual culture. Building on Zhang's (2007) and Avgerinou and Pettersson's (2011) understandings of visual language, and since language is a central element to culture, in the following section I explore the notion of 'visual culture'.

2.3.3 Visual culture

The term visual culture has been used largely by art educators to describe their main interest in teaching critical and historical studies in art education (Duncum & Bracey, 2001). However, a broader approach suggests that visual culture 'is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology' (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 3). This perspective encompasses elements deriving from a socio-cultural understanding of literacy, which incorporates literacy events, together with the social practices conducive to meaning making (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1999; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993).

The proliferation of imagery in modern society has inspired many scholars to embark on the study of visual culture as both an interdisciplinary field of inquiry and a conceptual framework or lens to understand a visually saturated world (Barnard, 2001; Duncum, 2010; Mirzoeff, 1999; Mitchell, 2002; Sullivan, 2001). Importantly, with this view of visual culture, the word technology can generate confusion, particularly in a modern world where the dissemination of visual information relies heavily on digital technologies (e.g., computer-based). As a way of clarifying, Mirzoeff (1999, p. 3) explains that visual technology can be 'any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from an oil painting to television and the internet'. Thus, technology (or technologies) may be equated to socio-culturally contextualised artefacts that are key pieces in historical, social and political events. Such artefacts include 'the fine arts, tribal arts, advertising, popular film and video, folk art, television and other performance, housing and apparel design, computer games and toy design' (Freedman, 2003, p. 1).

Culturally-situated artefacts are omnipresent, and since people 'see' all the time, most of the visual events a person experiences take place not in structured educational settings, art galleries or the cinema, but within everyday social practices. Thus, visual culture is the result of a complex exercise of abstraction and representation, using multiple visual languages in diverse settings to both produce and interpret visual communication (Mirzoeff, 1999). Studies in visual culture conceptualise visual texts as embedded in society, and pay close attention to their ingrained cultural aspects (Lister & Wells, 2001), rather than examining them in isolation from the context (Serafini, 2017).

The above discussion about the concepts of culture, representation and language, examined under the lens of Cultural Studies, expands the theoretical grounding of the study, and contributes to forming a holistic picture of how the participating teachers might interpret visual literacy specifically in the socio-cultural contexts of adult education and ELT in Australia, and with contrasting audiences of adult overseas students, immigrants and refugees. In the following section, I examine different perspectives on the concept of visual literacy, which have originated from a range of disciplines and may be applied to inform understandings of the role visual literacy and educators' use of visual texts play in adult ELT.

2.4 Perspectives on visual literacy

Over the past five decades many scholars have been working towards defining visual literacy, in particular members of the International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA) (Farrell, 2013). This has been an extensive endeavour partly due to the complexities of the field, and also to the fact that IVLA's membership is formed by professionals in many disciplines, including the arts, design, technology, sciences, psychology, education and media studies. With such a variety of interests and backgrounds, consensus on the concept has been difficult to achieve (Dondis, 1973). In addition, the prevalence of modern visual technologies and the shifting understandings of literacy have contributed to the continuous reshaping of the notion of visual literacy (Peña Alonso, 2018). Therefore, reaching agreement on a single definition of visual literacy might be just as complex as trying to unanimously articulate the general concept of literacy (Serafini, 2017). With this preface I wish to clarify that my intention in this section of the literature review is not to contribute to a definite and all-encompassing theory that explains visual literacy. Instead, I examine different representative views that inform understandings of the role visual literacy plays in adult ELT.

Peña and Dobson (2016) examine the mobilisation of the term visual literacy and trace its use back to 1939. This term appeared in *The art museum and the secondary school*, written by scholar and art critic Roger Tyler Davis, who argued that literacy in schooling needed to be approached not as one but many:

Mere reading and writing are no longer sufficient. Literacy of many kinds is necessary for taking a responsible part in a more complex world . . . Trained powers of observation which constitute visual literacy are essential. The exercise and training of visual perception is a concern of education in secondary schools, as it is of museum education (Davis, 1939, p. 13).

Despite Davis' interest in understanding the visual as a form of literacy, it is John Debes (1969) – founder of the IVLA – who is broadly recognised as the first to coin the term visual literacy (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997; Baca, 1990; Michelson, 2017). He defines it as:

A group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication (Debes, 1969, p. 26).

Debes' approach seems to have initiated multiple interpretations of visual literacy. Since then, many other researchers have proposed their own definitions, which have evolved concurrently with advances in technology that facilitate the dissemination of visual messages. For instance, Arbuckle (2004) explains visual literacy as 'the ability to comprehend pictures and other visual messages, such as film and even body language' (p. 445). Other authors such as Spalter and van Dam (2008) have dedicated their interest to complex processes by which we make sense of visual stimuli through computer-based materials. As a result, they have expanded the concept, offering the term 'digital visual literacy'. They explain that possessing digital visual literacy means being able to 'critically evaluate digital visual materials (two-dimensional, three-dimensional (3D), static, and moving) . . . and use computers to create effective visual communications' (p. 94).

Such varied definitions of visual literacy support the argument that trying to understand the many theories, research methodologies, and pedagogical approaches to the concept that have emerged over the past half century requires considering the paradigm shifts that have occurred in the social sciences (Serafini, 2017). A major shift that has influenced conceptualisations of visual literacy originated in art education, as this field moved beyond the study of fine art to examine many other forms of visual and cultural artefacts, including everyday-life objects (Duncum, 2004). In other words, the study of art became concerned not just about appreciation of paintings and sculptures, but of a much broader range of forms of visual expression.

Another important shift constitutes what Mitchell (1986) refers to as the 'pictorial turn'. Mitchell argues that the focus on visual texts as simply entertaining, accessory, complementary or illustrative of written texts has been overwritten by the understanding of visual texts as central to modes of communication, representation, and the processes involved in interpretation. The third and possibly

most radical shift was the move from printed to multimodal texts produced via digital and web-based technologies, which ‘have forever changed the concept of visual literacy and what constitutes a visual image and its production, distribution, and reception’ (Serafini, 2017, p. 12).

2.4.1 Visual literacy as a set of skills

Diverse conceptualisations of visual literacy, which have been influenced by views on how skills are acquired, can generally be classified along a continuum between two broad approaches (Peña Alonso, 2018). To begin with, visual literacy is considered an ability that occurs within the human experience as a result of a person’s life events and socialisation, not necessarily requiring overt instruction (Messaris, 2012). This approach connects the development of visual literacy with a person’s general cognitive abilities, suggesting that a viewer possesses the capabilities necessary to process visual information even without prior exposure to visual texts or training in how to decode them. This perspective connotes that the cognitive abilities involved in visual literacy are innate in people (Messaris, 1994). Thus, any person who has no visual impediment and is fully able to perceive visual information would be able to develop visual literacy by ‘assimilating such information by observation and experience’ (Peña Alonso, 2018, p. 3).

A contrasting approach to visual literacy as a naturally occurring ability is that it is as ‘a set of skills or competencies for visual communication that can (and should) be taught formally in the classroom’ (Peña Alonso, 2018, p. 3). Mastering these abilities enables people to understand (read), and to use (write) visual texts, as well as to think and learn in terms of visual texts (Avgerinou, 2007). This approach deems visual literacy as acquired as a result of instruction. In other words, an individual is taught how to become ‘visually literate’ (Flood, 2004; Langford, 2003; Metros, 2008). Visual literacy instruction facilitates learning and understanding how people interpret and manipulate visual texts and experience aesthetic appreciation of the visual (Messaris, 1994).

In order to interpret, appreciate and manipulate the visual, it is essential to distinguish between the processes of ‘seeing’ and ‘looking’. Seeing generally refers to the natural, passive and often unconscious interpretation of sensory information. Meanwhile, the concept of looking involves the psychological processes of being actively engaged in filtering, selecting, and classifying messages received through the senses, and is far more dynamic than seeing (Stafford, 2008). Looking is essential to developing visual literacy capabilities, is performed by conscious choice and requires going beyond the basic process of perception and purposefully engaging in the selection and interpretation of visual texts (Serafini, 2017). In this sense, looking is somewhat akin to the concept of ‘noticing’ in language

learning, which is deemed a metacognitive skill central to higher order, autonomous and critically engaged learning (Halliday, 2016; Harmer, 2013). Importantly, to be able to look, a person must learn the 'visual grammar' outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as a set of conventions that enable them to competently operate with visual texts, and to understand how the social practices associated with these communicate different meanings (Serafini, 2017). A visual grammar includes syntax and semantics, which – like in written languages – function as a set of rules that facilitate accurate use of language, and therefore the creation and understanding of visual texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The idea of a visual grammar is reflected in early attempts to outline the visual literacy skills that people require to make meaning from the composition or design of a visual text they see. For instance, Johnson (1978) argues that a visually literate individual should be able to:

- see the difference between light and dark
- recognise differences in brightness
- see similarities and differences in shapes
- distinguish colour from greys
- recognise differences and similarities in colours
- see distance, height and depth
- see movement
- recognise a whole shape when parts are covered or hidden
- understand simple body language
- recognise groups of objects that are commonly seen together (e.g., knife, fork and spoon)
- sequence objects that are not commonly seen together into some kind of meaning (p. 12).

Johnson's (1978) description of what a visually literate person should be capable of is explicitly related to the act of observing the composition of visual texts, which, it could be argued, would enable someone to formulate their personal interpretations of such text.

Another study that highlights how understanding the composition of visual texts is conducive to meaning making, was conducted by Arbuckle (2004), who investigates how adults who possess minimal reading skills and have had little exposure to forms of art, might misunderstand particular visual representations, due to elements of design and composition. In her study of visual literacy and print materials for adult basic education and training (ABET) in South Africa, Arbuckle included accounts provided by adult educators Hoffmann (2000) and Macdonald (1995) of the reactions of a

number of older learners with very low levels of literacy toward certain illustrations created using different design techniques (see Figures 4 and 5).



Figure 4. Toothpaste advertisement in Kenya
Adapted from Hoffman, 2000, *Picture supported communication in Africa* (p. 142), Weikersheim, Germany: Margraf Verlag.

This well-known photograph was intended for use in a toothpaste advertisement in Kenya. However, Nairobi 'slum dwellers' did not see the boy in the picture as 'fresh and healthy' looking, but as having grey cataracts in his eyes, skin ailments and 'deformed incisors which have grown together'.



Figure 5. Illustration for breastfeeding promotion
Adapted from Macdonald, 1995, *Materials development* (p. 74), Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal.

This picture was intended for materials aiming to promote breastfeeding as a healthy option. The way in which tone was created in this drawing, using small dots to show the shape of the forms and perhaps to indicate dark skin colour, led some viewers to think that the mother and child were both suffering from a disease such as measles.

Arbuckle's research (2004) emphasises the idea that understanding visual texts should not be seen as an inherent human ability, and that literacy teachers should not use visual texts under the assumption that these are part of a universal language that every sighted person can use to communicate. She argues that in order to understand the intended message in a visual text, that is, in accordance with the conventions of meaning which informed its production, the viewer needs to know the visual language that was employed to make such text. Arbuckle (2004, p. 450) calls this ability 'to understand pictures through an awareness of basic pictorial conventions, techniques and codes' picture literacy – a sub-set of visual literacy. Importantly, the author asserts that the development of picture literacy also involves awareness of the purposes or roles of visual texts in different contexts.

Acknowledgement of the importance of recognising the purpose and role of visual texts signals a transition from early definitions which were primordially concerned with the set of cognitive skills and the strategies needed to make sense of visual texts to more complex views, such as Braden and Hortin's (1982, p. 38), who propose: 'Visual literacy is the ability to understand and use images, including the ability to think, learn and express oneself in terms of images'. Notably, this perspective frames visual literacy as a two-way process, which includes both 'taking in' visual texts and communicating visually. In this fashion, more contemporary definitions of visual literacy suggest that it ought to be more broadly understood as a set of contextualised social practices, which encompass both interpretation – making sense of visual texts – and the production elements of designing, creating, and distributing visual texts (Callow, 2003).

2.4.2 Visual literacy as contextualised social practice

Current perspectives on visual literacy maintain that the processes of viewing, interpreting and producing visual texts are informed by what people see with their eyes as much as by their wealth of previous experiences (Callow, 2003). Such views on visual literacy deem it to be a contextualised social practice that encompasses not only the visual aspect of observing visual texts, but also meaning making through the activation of many cognitive, aesthetic, historical and affective elements (Callow, 2016; Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013; Kędra, 2018; Serafini, 2017; Takaya, 2016). The understanding of meaning making as personal, subjective and changing, suggests that adult ELT practices that incorporate visual texts ought to be founded on the idea that no matter how 'obvious' the meaning of a photograph, a video or a gesture might be to some (e.g., the teacher), the message such a visual representation communicates depends on both the intention of the person who produces it and the interpretation of the individual who observes it.

Serafini's (2017) definition of visual literacy stands out for its inclusion of the embeddedness of this particular literacy within a socio-cultural context and the relationship between words and images as interplaying texts:

[Visual literacy is] a process of generating meanings in transaction with multimodal ensembles that include written text, visual images, and design elements from a variety of perspectives to meet the requirements of particular social contexts (Serafini, 2017, p. 1).

Here, the author acknowledges that people are continuously participating in multiple literacy practices. These practices incorporate socially embedded discourses (Gee, 1991) and multimodal

communications (Ajayi, 2009; Kress, 2010) linked to digital technologies (Lankshear et al., 1997; Snyder, 2009). This position, which fosters an inclusive and expansive approach to understanding visual texts, is in line with the socio-cultural approach to literacy explored in Literacy Studies (Barton, 2007; Street, 2009a). Other scholars such as Arbuckle (2004), Avgerinou (2007), Baca (1990), Bamford (2003), Farrell (2015), Flood (2004) and Messaris (1994) also incorporate a social element in their conceptualisations of visual literacy and the competencies involved. For instance, among what abilities people need to accurately engage with visual texts, Bamford (2003) includes three key requisite capabilities. She argues that a visually literate person should be able to appraise the aesthetic merit of the work, to form opinions in relation to its purpose and audience, and to 'grasp the synergy, interaction, innovation, affective impact and/or "feel" of an image' (p. 1).

Developing and utilising the visual literacy capabilities that Bamford (2003) describes, involves the social aspect of making connections to prior visual texts in different contexts. Recognising these connections facilitates being able to understand the purpose for which a visual text was created, to appreciate its aesthetic value, and to connect with the ideas this visual text represents or to the feelings it provokes in a particular audience. Taking into account the purpose of a visual text, Flood (2004) presents the following competencies as typical characteristics of a visually literate person:

- A broad understanding of image viewing and making (knowledge, comprehension and application).
- The ability to access information through visual media (knowledge and comprehension).
- The ability to deconstruct imagery (application and analysis).
- The ability to reconstruct, to form new individual imagery (application and synthesis).
- The ability to understand the purpose and meaning of imagery; to provide validity and verification of imagery (synthesis and evaluation) (p. 75).

These competencies stem from approaches to reading a text. Flood (2004) reflects on the different ways in which written and visual texts are deconstructed. She argues that unlike prescribed linear reading methods (e.g., first the introduction, then the body and finally the conclusion), how visual texts are explored is not so straightforward. The visually literate individual brings to the experience of viewing their personal knowledge, and this determines at what focal point they begin observing a drawing, painting or graph, and what tensions, lines or details they follow, as well as how they give meaning to the visual text. If their previous experiences do not help make the visual text readily accessible to them, the visually literate person can resort to the connections they make through association and 'the experience most closely allied will be applied to create understanding' (Flood, 2004, p. 73).

2.4.3 A contemporary definition of visual literacy

By way of an audit of several definitions of visual literacy, both from a general perspective and through the lens of various disciplines, and ranging from the 1970s until the present, Kędra (2018) explores the skills that visually literate individuals should possess and be able to demonstrate. Kędra explains that following the lack of agreement on definitions of visual literacy and its theory, scholars in the field use the terms ‘ability’, ‘skill’ and ‘competency’ interchangeably to describe comprehension. She employs the term ‘skill’ to refer to ‘a learnt ability, which is acquired through systematic effort’ (Kędra, 2018, p.72) and adheres to Avgerinou’s (2007) view, in which visual literacy skills must be learnt, taught, developed and improved. Employing a similar approach to Flood’s (2004), Kędra makes reference to the processes of reading and writing in traditional literacy terms and applies these to her classification of ‘visual reading’ and ‘visual writing’ skills.

Kędra (2018) contends that although frequent exposure to visual texts of different kinds and socialising facilitate learning by observation, for individuals to be able to effectively communicate visually, purposeful training is required. Skills are therefore learnt abilities. The author elaborates, stating that ‘intentional [visual literacy] training can help learners to become visually literate and competent individuals. Competence, competency or competencies [in visual literacy] enable individuals to efficiently communicate visually’ (Kędra, 2018, p.72). She identifies three categories of thematic groups of skills. These categories are: visual reading skills (e.g., interpreting, meaning making), visual writing skills (e.g., using or creating visual texts), and visual thinking, visual learning and applied image use, which she classifies under ‘other visual literacy skills’ (see Figure 6).

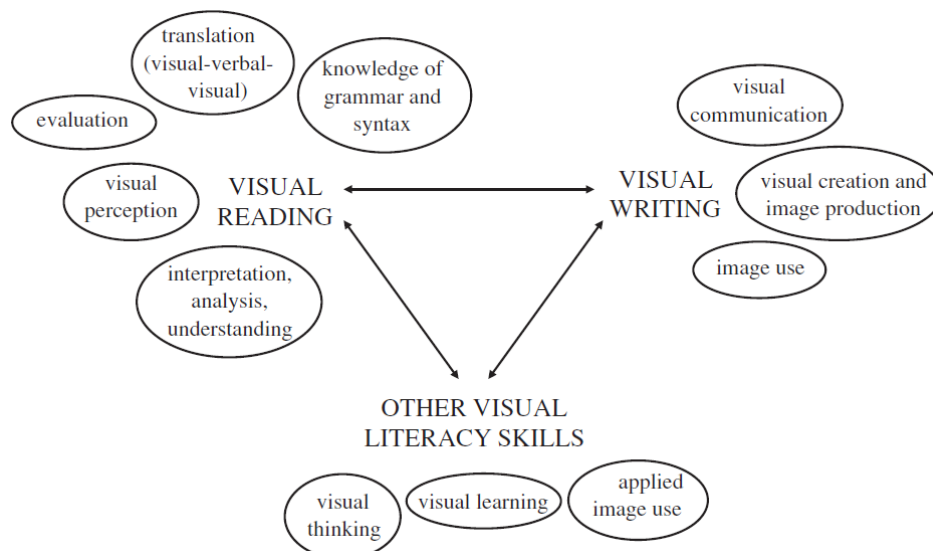


Figure 6. Three categories of visual literacy skills with thematic groups of skills
Adapted from Kędra, 2018, “What does it mean to be visually literate? Examination of visual literacy definitions in a context of higher education”, *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 37(2), p. 81.

In Kędra's (2018) model, visual reading skills are divided into five thematic groups: interpreting, analysing and understanding; visual perception; evaluation; knowledge of grammar and syntax; translation (visual–verbal–visual) (p. 73). Interpretation encompasses the ability to recognise not only still and moving images, but various other kinds of visual texts, including visible actions, objects and symbols, which Felten (2008) calls 'culturally significant' images. Analysis of visual texts includes comprehension through informal observation of norms and behaviours, as well as through education on how to decode manipulated visual content, how to 'read' a visual text beyond its design or composition, and how to follow pictorial instructions. Visual perception refers to the ability to look at visual texts and develop a critical sensibility to such texts (e.g., enjoyment, amusement, indifference). Evaluation involves making decisions based on information obtained through the interpretation and perception of the visual text viewed (Kędra, 2018).

In line with the notion of a visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) explored earlier, Kędra (2018) highlights the need for knowledge of visual language vocabulary, rules and conventions, which people use to interpret a visual text and verbalise the result of such an interpretation process. This notion brings up the idea of 'image translation', which Kędra (2018, p. 77) describes as 'comprehensive understanding and analysis of certain visual communications and vice versa'. To put it simply, image translation refers to being able to produce visual texts that communicate the meaning of written (or verbal) text. It is important to note that this process relates to the decoding aspect of visual literacy, with the idea of encoding being an element of 'writing texts'.

The second thematic group of skills that Kędra (2018) articulates, constitutes a set of visual writing skills, which she divides into 'visual communication, visual creation and image production, and image use' (p. 77). Visual communication means the ability to communicate intentionally and effectively with others, using either visual texts or combining visual and written or verbal texts. Visual creation skills encompass the design and production of visual materials in a variety of media (Hattwig et al., 2013; Metros & Woolsey, 2006). Finally, image use skills refer to the ability visually literate individuals possess to employ existing visual texts effectively and ethically (Avgerinou, 2007; Braden & Hortin, 1982), and the appropriate use of culturally significant visual texts, which include still and moving images, objects or visible actions (Felten, 2008). The significant nature of visual texts is often linked to how widely spread such texts are across cultures and societies, and visually literate individuals should be aware of the impact of the dissemination of visual texts via channels of visually mediated communication, such as social media (Felten, 2008; Kędra, 2018).

According to Kędra (2018), the third set of skills she identifies does not fit within definitions of visual literacy in terms of reading or writing visual texts; hence she calls them 'other visual literacy skills'. These are visual thinking, visual learning and applied image use. Visual thinking has often been seen by people outside visually oriented disciplines (e.g., the arts, design) as an intuitive, unmethodical, and even subconscious action (Brumberger, 2007). In contrast, scholars in fields closely related to the creation and use of visual texts consider it an active problem-solving process that begins with perception (Goldschmidt, 1994; Landa, 1998). Kędra (2018) explains:

Competency in visual thinking is the result of visual education – the more learners interact with images in a systematic way, the more they learn to see. Similarly, abilities to learn in terms of images develop along the process of visual education. Thus, competency in visual thinking and learning is not simply a consequence of daily encounters with images (p.79).

Here, Kędra (2018) argues in favour of the view that although intuition and exposure may contribute to visual thinking, the latter is an intellectual process of generation of visual ideas through problem-solving, employing visual language (Brumberger, 2007), which relies on visual texts and elements such as shapes, patterns, textures and colours, rather than on written or verbal language. Thus, visual thinking should be considered to be 'as purposeful, recursive, and sophisticated as verbal thinking' (Brumberger, 2007, p. 381).

Visual learning – often referred to as a 'learning style' (Kirby, Moore, & Schofield, 1988; Knoll, Otani, Skeel, & Van Horn, 2017; Willems, 2009) – involves the ability to employ visual mental images, a process which, developmentally, precedes understanding words. This ability to form conceptualisations even without possessing written or spoken literacy in a particular language is a highly complex process, which facilitates learning (Hodes, 1998). Through visual learning, an individual can 'isolate and identify important material, recall prior knowledge, provide interaction with content, and enhance information acquisition: Visuals make the abstract more concrete' (p. 134). Visual learning, in turn, is evidenced by a person's 'applied use of image', which includes the ability to recognise ethical and practical aspects of visual text use, such as identifying when conveying a message requires visual texts, how to source, select and cite these, and the impact their use may have in communication (Kędra, 2018).

The theory explored in this section on perspectives on visual literacy has indicated that understanding visual literacy as a set of social practices involves taking into consideration the varied contexts in which the creation and interpretation of visual texts may occur, as well as the different audiences who view

them. A related issue to which scholars in many disciplines have dedicated attention, is the delineation of visual literacy standards required of learners across many disciplines, knowledge of which can facilitate educators' grasp of how visual literacy skills can be best understood and hence evaluated. Such scholars include Arbuckle (2004) in adult literacy teaching, Farrell (2013) in teacher education, and Arslan and Nalinci (2014), Brown (2016), Hattwig et al. (2013) and Kędra (2018) in the context of higher education.

2.4.4 Applying theory: Visual literacy standards in adult ELT

In the broad area of adult education – in which this study is situated – the development of visual literacy standards has been used as a strategy to evaluate whether learners are equipped with this essential 21st century skill (Bleed, 2005; Blummer, 2015; de Silva Joyce, 2014; Hattwig et al., 2013) and are able to effectively use it to their advantage in workplaces, businesses and education settings. However, the extent to which this topic has been explored in adult ELT varies. For instance, in Australia, there appears to be an absence of explicit reference to visual literacy standards for learners in Government-funded English language programs and in ELICOS.

Due to the limitations imposed by the commercial value attached to the CSWE – the curriculum used by providers of English language programs for adult migrants – access to the full curriculum and/or syllabus documents is restricted. Nevertheless, de Silva Joyce (2014), a teacher whose research has been endorsed by AMES New South Wales – a major Government-funded provider of programs for adult migrants and refugees, offers a sample of CSWE learning outcomes related to visual literacy capabilities in her book *Multimodal and visual literacy in the adult language and literacy classroom*. For instance, one of the outcomes outlined in the *Speaking and writing skills for presentations module* of the *Certificate IV in Spoken and Written English* requires students to 'create appropriate visual aids to support presentations' (de Silva Joyce, 2014, p. 4). Although this might be an indication of an attempt to embed visual literacy in the adult ELT curriculum, this outcome is, as presented in the CSWE, an element of the ultimate aim of learning to speak and write, and not necessarily specific to the development of visual literacy skills. In a similar manner to Government-funded English language programs for adult migrants and refugees in Australia, ELICOS providers do not explicitly outline visual literacy standards required of learners.

In other geographic contexts, academics in higher education consider the implementation of assessable standardised skills or clusters of skills helpful in fostering the development of visual literacy competencies in their students (Hattwig et al., 2013; Kędra, 2018). For instance, the Association of

College and Research Libraries (ACRL), based in the United States, outlined the *Visual Literacy Competency Standards in Higher Education* (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2011) with the purpose of observing, evaluating and discussing such capabilities in terms of performance indicators. According to these standards, a visually literate person is able to:

- Determine the nature and extent of the visual materials needed.
- Find and access needed images and visual media effectively and efficiently.
- Interpret and analyze the meanings of images and visual media.
- Evaluate images and their sources.
- Use images and visual media effectively.
- Design and create meaningful images and visual media.
- Understand many of the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images and visual media, and access and use visual materials ethically (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2011, p. 1).

The ACRL visual literacy standards offer observable learning outcomes that can be taught and evaluated. These standards and outcome statements assist the development of tools for educators across disciplines to discuss issues regarding students' use of visual texts in academic work and the effect that this has in their lives (Hattwig et al., 2013). Furthermore, depending on how visual texts are used in different disciplines, the Standards can facilitate ways to integrate the required visual literacy skills into subject-specific curricula (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2011). Each of the seven standards can be used individually or in conjunction with some or all the others 'depending on curricular needs and overall learning goals of a program or institution' (p. 2) and should be an institution-wide endeavour. This means that employing these guidelines to integrate visual literacy into higher education programs requires collaboration between different areas within institutions (e.g., faculty, library staff, technology experts and creators of visual resources).

Rather than presenting a debate in the field, the goal of including historical and contemporary definitions of visual literacy in this review of the literature, as well as of investigating visual literacy standards, was to build a wide-ranging view of the concept of visual literacy and observable applications in the specific context of adult education, which frames this study. Although research outlining such definitions and standards has not explored the topic from the perspective of the adult English language teacher in Australia, the literature reviewed situates the current study within the relevant body of knowledge. Given the comprehensiveness of

Kędra's (2018) model of understanding visual literacy from the viewpoints of various scholars in the field and from many disciplines, and the ACRL's (2011) clearly articulated standards, which apply to adult learners, these are considered most suitable to inform this research and provide a conceptual context for the reader.

2.5 Summary

In Chapter 2, I have explored concepts central to the study, which ground the discussion about visual literacy by first providing an account of historical and current perspectives on literacy. This overview of literacy has illustrated how the notion has evolved over time, shifting from the psychological view of a set of de-contextualised cognitive skills, to understandings of literacy as culturally and socially situated. The chapter has provided an account of the complex social view of literacy advocated by scholars in the field of Literacy Studies, and the notion of text as being at the core of social practices, not only in the traditional sense of print-based writing, but as presented through multiple modes of communication.

The concept of Multiliteracies and the application of this to develop a multimodal approach to literacy pedagogy have been explored, highlighting the idea that with the increasingly multimodal nature of current textual habitats, reconceptualising the nature of language and literacy learning and teaching is imperative. I have also examined Green's 3D model of literacy (1988, 2012b) and Callow's (2005) three dimensions of viewing, which contribute to framing the study in terms of operational, cultural, critical and affective elements of understanding visual literacy. In addition, I have delved into the notion of culture, noting in particular how it informs understandings of language. I have examined Cultural Studies as a discipline and explored intersections between the notions of text, culture, representation and language. Each of these concepts plays a role in understanding visual literacy. I have also explained the concepts of visual language and visual culture, key to articulating visual literacy. The discussions on literacy and culture and relevant concepts laid a foundation for examining different ways in which visual literacy has been conceptualised and applied across disciplines over the past half century. The chapter ends with an examination of a contemporary definition of visual literacy and the notion of visual literacy standards in relation to adult ELT.

3 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: ADULT ELT

Acknowledging there is limited research that makes explicit reference to what shapes teachers' understandings of visual literacy and their classroom practices related to the use of visual texts in the adult ELT context, in this chapter, I explore literature on seven key aspects considered to influence adult ELT. The chapter begins with a discussion of common 'teacher beliefs', then addresses favoured teaching approaches in adult ELT, highlighting the widely adopted communication-oriented language teaching method and the pervasiveness of grammar-focused classroom practices. The next section explores the notions of purpose and teachers' roles in adult ELT, followed by an examination of the context in teaching and learning and the specific case of adult education. The final two sections look into adult English language teachers' foundations of visual literacy and their practice of research as adult ELT practitioners.

3.1 Teacher beliefs

In order to understand 'teacher beliefs', it is important to begin by defining the notion of 'beliefs', which has been conceptualised from a range of psychological and philosophical perspectives across disciplines and thus has diverse denotations (Borg, 2011; Nespor, 1987; Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006; Zheng, 2015). Pajares (1992) suggests:

Defining beliefs is at best a game of player's choice. They travel in disguise and often under alias—attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in literature (p. 309).

Notwithstanding the varied terminology, some ideas prevail among definitions of beliefs. Firstly, a belief is a state of mind in which an individual thinks that something they become aware of is true, with or without the presence of empirical evidence that can prove with factual certainty that something is the case. Secondly, a belief is formed at an individual level, even if this is shared by many people (Borg, 2001). Therefore, its proposition can be accepted as true by one person and not necessarily by another. Finally, beliefs possess an evaluative aspect, which guides people's thinking and actions (Borg, 2001; Murphy & Mason, 2006). More specifically, beliefs include the judgements that people make about something or someone, which then inform the practices they adopt.

In research specific to teacher beliefs, studies have identified a number of key characteristics. Firstly, teacher beliefs are inextricably linked to a specific institutional context and the people and circumstances that this context involves (Díaz, Alarcón, & Ortiz, 2015; Rivera Cuayahuitl & Pérez Carranza, 2015; Zheng, 2015). This is important, as an educator's understanding of their profession is influenced by the environment in which they teach, the people they teach and the specific academic content they impart in a particular learning context (Díaz et al., 2015; Kagan, 1992). Teachers' perceptions of the contexts in which they work enable them to negotiate classroom dynamics, set and strive for relevant goals and work out solutions for challenging situations (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Fenwick & Cooper, 2013; Nespor, 1987).

Another common feature in teacher beliefs is that these are interpretive and reflective constructs (Zheng, 2015). Such constructs are formed upon 'conscious opinions and unconscious intuitions, personal values, attitudes and ideologies' (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2001, p. 446). In relation to unconscious interpretations, it is important to note that these may indeed guide teachers' decisions and actions without them necessarily paying explicit attention to or acknowledging them (Thompson, 1984). Finally, teacher beliefs are built from what they observe in their practical teaching and learning experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Pajares, 1992). The teachers' interpretations and reflections of their experience contribute to decision-making processes that shape the actions they take in the classroom (Zheng, 2015). As a case in point, the beliefs English language teachers hold about the pedagogical approaches they employ may originate primarily from their own learning experiences (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 1998). Such is the case of language educators who have learnt other languages and have built on this personal experience to conceptualise how people go through this process, and to form their own opinions of how language should be taught (Peacock, 2001). Wach (2013) sums up teacher beliefs as follows:

Teachers' beliefs, which are derived from different sources, such as their language learning experience, professional training, teaching experience, cultural values, or personality, are responsible for the way they understand and evaluate certain phenomena, and, consequently, for the way they behave (Wach, 2013, p. 296).

In order to facilitate theorising for a study in the specific context of ELT in China, Zheng (2015) provided his own definition of teacher beliefs. He described them as 'teachers' psychologically held thinking, conceptions and understanding about EFL teaching and learning' (p. 14). This description provides a frame of reference for this study. Thus, henceforth, when I mention 'adult English language teacher beliefs', I refer to teachers' understanding of the many factors that influence their students' learning

and their own teaching of adult students of English as an additional language, and of the phenomena that affect these learners' acquisition and development of multiple literacies.

3.2 Teaching approaches: Communicative versus focus on form

Teacher beliefs influence the teaching approaches they adhere to and in turn, the diverse practices they adopt in their classrooms (Borg, 2001; Fang, 1996; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Galvis, 2012; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Xiang & Borg, 2014). One of the most commonly reported EAL, EFL and ESL teaching approaches is the 'communicative method' (Block, 2002) or 'communication-oriented language teaching' (Littlewood, 2014). This approach has been considered to facilitate the development of communicative competence in more meaningful ways (Harmer, 2013; Littlewood, 2014) than methods based on the drilling of de-contextualised 'correct' forms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and grammar (Fleming, Bangou, & Fellus, 2011). The communicative approach has become the most widely accepted methodology for English language programs since the 1980s (Faine, 2008; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Littlewood, 2014). Its key principles emphasise learner-centred instruction, pedagogies that favour task-based activities, and focus on language function rather than its form (Brown, 2000). The widespread implementation of the communicative approach has encouraged educators to tailor the ways in which they teach in order to account for the rules of use of the target language in specific social contexts (Fleming et al., 2011).

Despite the proliferation of the communicative language teaching method, approaches that emphasise the importance of accurate use of language form (e.g., syntax, morphology, phonology) remain pervasive in ELT practice (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Fleming et al., 2011; Harmer, 2013; Littlewood, 2014). It seems natural to think that mastery of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and the role these elements play in achieving proficiency in the traditional literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, would be key language teachers' objectives. Research addressing teachers' focus on language form in various educational contexts include studies conducted by Barnard and Scampton (2008), Basturkmen et al. (2004), Burgess and Etherington (2002), Farrell and Lim (2005), Jean and Simard (2011), and Phipps and Borg (2009).

Two of these studies focused on language form were conducted in the adult ELT context. Barnard and Scampton (2008) and Burgess and Etherington (2002) investigated educators in pre-university English language courses in New Zealand and Britain, respectively. The findings from both studies revealed the central position of grammar in such programs, which was reflected in the teachers' practices. This

preoccupation with the mastery of grammar appeared to be founded upon the teachers' beliefs about its importance for success in university. Although the participating teachers expressed appreciation for the value of facilitating a communication-oriented classroom environment, they also stressed how explicit grammar instruction was most needed and useful (Wach, 2013). These views are reflected in the Australian context, where, as explained earlier, adult ELT programs are often designed to match the proficiency levels delineated by the IELTS exam in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills (Elder & O'Loughlin, 2003; Feast, 2002; O'Loughlin, 2013).

In the context of schools, Basturkmen et al. (2004), Farrell and Lim (2005), Jean and Simard (2011) and Wach (2013) investigated whether there was an association between teachers' statements about teaching grammar and their classroom practices. These studies exposed inconsistencies between the English language teachers' stated views on the importance of communication over the mastery of grammar and what they actually practised in the classroom. Wach (2013) found that although the teachers may have professed an appreciation of pedagogies that fostered a communicative language teaching approach, traditional forms of grammar instruction prevailed in the lessons observed in the study. Interestingly, Jean and Simard's (2011) study revealed that while grammar teaching was deemed important by teachers, it was not considered an enjoyable element of ELT. In short, it seems that the explicit teaching of grammar is still highly regarded by English language teachers.

3.3 ELT purpose and the teacher's role

Views on the purpose of ELT inform how teachers approach the work that they do and the multiple activities they employ in their practice (Freeman & Richards, 1993). The idea of purpose, which can be very different for many teachers, shapes how they view the ELT profession. For instance, while some educators may conceive language teaching as a process in which information is transmitted, others may see it as the task of guiding students' language learning (Zheng, 2015). The purpose of teaching for some educators may be fostering social relationships with and among students, while for yet others, the key objective of teaching may be facilitating the development of academic capabilities (Calderhead, 1996).

The idea of purpose has prompted scholars such as Calderhead and Shorrock (1997), Farrell (2011) and Kleinsasser, Collins, and Nelson (1994) to explore the different perceptions that teachers may have of their role. For example, teachers can see themselves as experts in their subject, as motivators, as champions of good standards or as persons in charge of delivering the content prescribed by a set curriculum (Borg, 2006; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Debreli, 2012). Importantly, these roles are not

exclusive. Depending on the time spent in the profession, the demographics of a particular class, the goals of a specific lesson, and/or the topic being discussed, a teacher can adopt these positions either one at the time or simultaneously. These views about the role teachers carry out in their classrooms influence how they manage their environment, choose and tailor suitable pedagogies, plan their delivery of the curriculum and evaluate the work of their students (Borg, 2011; Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

3.4 The context and audience in teaching and learning

Educational research has also identified social, cultural and economic contexts as important factors influencing teaching and learning (Fenwick & Cooper, 2013). Importantly, the notion of context has various interpretations and implications. Commonly employed terms in educational research include 'context' in general, the 'teaching context' and the 'institutional context' (Rivera Cuayahuitl & Pérez Carranza, 2015). These notions are associated with where people learn. Context, from a broad perspective, refers to the geographic location, atmosphere and community within which the school is located. Meanwhile, the teaching context relates to the physical environment that constitutes the teaching space, encompassing all the components within this setting. These elements may include anything from the classrooms, facilities and technologies available (e.g., smart boards, printers), to the teaching materials (e.g., textbooks, markers) and other physical resources and spaces used by both teacher and students (e.g., computer labs, libraries). Even the conditions that create a classroom environment (e.g., accessibility, room temperature, ventilation) can be considered part of the teaching context. Finally, the term institutional context is frequently used to discuss school policies, curriculum and philosophies that affect teachers and their practices, as well as students' learning (Rivera Cuayahuitl & Pérez Carranza, 2015).

In the case of ELT, studies examining the teaching context indicate that this plays an important role in how teachers approach their work (Borg, 2006; Díaz et al., 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001; Rivera Cuayahuitl & Pérez Carranza, 2015). Borg (2006, p. 275) asserts that 'the social, institutional, instructional, and physical settings in which teachers work have a major impact on their cognitions and practices'. Contextual factors may be linked to teachers' judgements regarding teaching methods, the technologies they may have at their disposal and choose to make use of in their teaching, and even the language they use. For instance, Díaz et al. (2015) found in their study that, although English language teachers in public schools stated that language teaching should follow the principles of communication-oriented approaches, this was often not feasible, due

to limitations posed by their learners' poor academic experiences and behaviours derived from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Knowledge and assumptions about the ethnic, historical, political and cultural contexts from which student populations originate, also influence adult English language teachers' practices (Ellis, 2013). Congruently, founded on the notion that 'schooling is essential for future prosperity and wellbeing' (Fenwick & Cooper, 2013, p. 97), government initiatives have endeavoured to provide students from low socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds with meaningful pathways into tertiary education and work. Similarly, as explained earlier, the Australian Government dedicates funding to the language and literacy education of adult migrants and refugees (Martin, 2000). A conjecture often made by teachers in this context, is that migrant and refugee student populations originate from low socio-economic conditions (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007; Carey & Robertson, 2015; Martin, 2000). By contrast, ELICOS students pay high tuition fees (Bundensen, 2011; Carey & Robertson, 2015). This circumstance invites speculation among teachers and policy-makers about the higher socio-economic status of people who come to study English in Australia with aspirations of enrolling as full-fee paying students in higher education degrees.

Along with conclusions teachers may arrive at on the basis of students' presumed socio-economic status, their perspectives on the ways in which adult learners of English interact in the teaching context also influence their practices (DiAngelo, 2006; Ellwood, 2009; Kubota & Lin, 2009). These views are usually founded upon teachers' observations of the contrasting behaviours of student cohorts originating from different parts of the world. For instance, Ellwood (2009) suggests that there is a tendency among adult English language teachers to have preconceptions of Asian and European students. In Ellwood's study of an Australian university adult ELT classroom, a participating teacher reported viewing the European students in her class as 'a homogeneous group, with the greater capability to do this work of critical thinking', whereas the Asian students were described as 'passive non-speakers' (p. 107) with lesser capability. Teachers' perceptions about students' behaviour based on country of origin may have a strong influence on the pedagogies they choose to employ in their classrooms. In adult ELT, such views on pedagogies are linked to teachers' understandings of the particular context of adult education, which I cover in the following section.

3.5 Adult education in Australia

A strong influence on adult English language teachers' thinking about how language should be taught is their consideration of the particular ways in which adults learn (Breen et al., 1998; Pratt, 1993;

Rodriguez, 2016; Vella, 2002). Since the current study is interested in the views of English teachers of adult migrant and refugees and post-secondary students preparing for higher education, it is important to bring into the picture key aspects of adult education, which also inform professional practices (Roessger, 2017). To set the context, as it is the case in other countries with large numbers of adult immigrants and international students (e.g., Canada, the UK and the USA) (Riley & Douglas, 2017), in Australia, adult ELT is taught almost entirely through the medium of English to mixed-language classes of students from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and with varied learning experiences (Ellis, 2013). Nevertheless, there are some exceptions to this standard monolingual approach to ELT in Australia. For instance, AMES offers limited Chinese bilingual English classes, which provide language tuition to migrants who possess very low speaking and listening skills (AMES Australia, 2018).

In terms of educators' views on the most suitable approaches to teaching adults, it is important to acknowledge that current ELT practices (Atkinson, 2017; Choi & Ziegler, 2015; Kamisli & Ozonur, 2017; Palis & Quiros, 2014; Rodriguez, 2016) are largely based on the principles of 'andragogy' proposed by Knowles (1973, 1984, 2005). Knowles (2005, p. 3) defines andragogy as 'a core set of adult learning principles' and argues that these apply to all adult learning situations. He suggests that adults (1) are self-directed learners, (2) possess life experiences which serve them as resources as they learn, (3) are practical and adept problem-solvers, (4) need to see how what they learn is applicable to their lives, and (5) want to know why something should be learnt. He adds that for the andragogy principles to provide a good framework for adult education practice, it is vital to adapt them to fit the individuality of learner cohorts and the learning situation (Knowles, 2005).

The concept of andragogy has been interchangeably described as a theory (Knowles, 1984), a philosophy (Pratt, 1993), a set of guidelines (Merriam, 1993), and a set of assumptions (Brookfield, 1996). Regardless of different authors' choice of terminology, the principles proposed by Knowles in the 1970s – which have been refined since – continue to be widely applied to adult ELT (Kamisli & Ozonur, 2017; Leigh, Whitted, & Hamilton, 2015; Norman & Schmidt, 1992; Rodriguez, 2016; Vella, 2002; Wallace, 1998; Wolfson, 1998) and several other contexts. Thus, Knowles (2005) argues that his ideas 'sparked a revolution in adult education and training' and that 'adult educators, particularly beginning ones, find these core principles invaluable in shaping the learning process to be more conducive to adults' (p. 2).

On the premise that adult learners tend to be self-directed and aware of their own learning needs, it is important to introduce new knowledge with relevance to real life situations (Atkinson, 2017; Mayer, 2016; Norman & Schmidt, 1992; Tett, 2013), such as their need to obtain employment or to employ various communication methods. It is therefore considered best practice for adult educators that they outline goals and objectives in advance (Palis & Quiros, 2014). In adult ELT programs, this usually happens at the beginning of a term, a week and, ideally at the start of each lesson. This practice empowers learners, as it gives them a preview of what they are about to learn, helps them understand the reasons why they need to learn new content, and places on them the responsibility for planning, organising and controlling their own learning through habits like active participation in class and independent study. The inclusion of techniques that take into consideration the learners' experiences fosters active participation and invites them to reflect on their own learning, thus connecting previous knowledge with new information, which they can then understand, retain and apply (Norman & Schmidt, 1992).

Understanding the principles of andragogy enables teachers to assess their learners' needs, expectations and requirements (Palis & Quiros, 2014). Knowing and understanding students' needs facilitates appropriate planning and maximisation of time and resources. One of the benefits of being aware of what the adult learner knows and needs, is avoiding making the mistake of teaching content that is below their knowledge base and capabilities, or so difficult that they find it excessively challenging or irrelevant to their needs. It is worth mentioning that although knowing the students' needs might sound an obvious requirement for effective teaching, achieving this goal can be difficult due to the cultural and linguistic diversity of students in adult English language classrooms in Australia.

Consideration of the unique needs of contrasting adult student cohorts is reflected in the clear and overt division of Australian adult ELT today into two major sectors: ELICOS and Government-funded adult English language programs. Teaching and administrative staff in these two sectors tailor their programs to acknowledge contrasting major life experience in their student cohorts and provide suitable learning environments. The differences in these adult ELT programs are mainly related to their objectives (e.g., to prepare students for university versus helping them settle into life in Australia) and students' arrival circumstances (e.g., on a student visa rather than as a migrant or refugee).

3.6 Teachers' foundations of visual literacy

Despite the growing global recognition of the importance of visual literacy in education, there is limited research on whether this subject is included in the preparation courses adult English language

teachers undertake, and thus, on how these professional foundations shape their teaching of visual literacy in the context of ELICOS and Government-funded programs for adult migrants in Australia. In other words, little attention has been given to specifically identifying if and how these teachers' own education is reflected in their use of visual texts in their classroom practices. To support this argument, I searched for studies on adult English language teachers' understanding, conceptualisations, perceptions and/or beliefs regarding visual literacy, first globally, then narrowing this down to Australian research. Even though not all the research identified was set specifically in the contexts of ELT or adult education, the following literature helps inform my inquiry into what adult English language teachers think, believe and understand about visual literacy, with the purpose of identifying in what ways such constructs inform their classroom practices. Below are some salient examples of recent empirical studies addressing language teachers' positions toward visual literacy.

In a study conducted in Israel, Eilam (2012) found that limited attention was given to providing foundations of visual literacy in preservice and in-service programs for school teachers. This was reflected in the educators' minimal concern for the subject, in contrast to the large efforts they made to foster their students' development of written or spoken language. Eilam (2012) argues:

Teachers who are 'naïve' concerning [visual representations]' basic elements, functions, and desired pedagogies might miss important educational opportunities for integrating [visual representations] as instructional and learning tools and for granting visual literacy to their students (p. 96).

Eilam (2012) explains that this claim is not intended to place teachers on a deficit framework, but to highlight areas of today's global education which require more consideration. She attributes this limitation to the teachers' training, suggesting that no overt opportunities are provided to student teachers to learn and practise the visual literacy skills required to guide their learners in examining and articulating the structural and content characteristics of visual texts, and in drawing conclusions based on the information a visual text conveys. This claim is in line with Kress' (2000) contention that while most contemporary language instruction textbooks use written, visual and multimodal texts as for communication, English language teachers 'continue to act as though [English language] fully represents the meaning they wish to encode and communicate' (p. 337). Kress affirms that in today's multimodal learning environments it is necessary to understand language and its uses taking into consideration the effects of all modes of representation that encompass any text.

Another study – this one of secondary teachers of English language arts ('English' in Australia) in 12 schools across the state of Kansas, USA (Robertson, 2007) – was built upon three key questions about

teachers' beliefs in relation to visual literacy. The English teacher and researcher wanted to know: firstly, to what extent the participants thought that using visual texts was important in helping students learn; secondly, if they believed they were equipped and responsible for teaching students how to interpret and use visual texts; and thirdly, if they encouraged their students to use visual texts to communicate. Findings revealed that the majority of the surveyed participants knew little or nothing about teaching visual literacy, and that their informal training on the topic consisted primarily of discussions with colleagues and self-directed study. Thus, these educators saw visual literacy instruction as secondary to teaching traditional literacy skills (e.g., reading and writing) and saw themselves as unequipped to approach the subject in their classrooms. Furthermore, over 50 percent of the teachers agreed that visual arts teachers should be the ones in charge of visual literacy instruction.

In a study on educational development conducted in Mexico City, Mexico, Burns (2006b) explored the implications for teachers of the adoption of multimedia technology in mainstream schools, with emphasis on the shift from written to visual texts afforded by such technologies. Examining a series of in-house professional development initiatives for practising school teachers, Burns found that teacher training programs and professional development addressing visual literacy concentrated on the use of digital technologies. Furthermore, participating teachers felt ill-equipped to embrace the learning potentials of pedagogies that include the use of visual texts, due to having experienced little guidance or explicit instruction on visual literacy. Burns (2006b) argues that in order to understand visual literacy, it is important to avoid over-focusing on the mechanics of effectively using technology. Instead, teachers need overt instruction on 'the larger cognitive framework of comprehension, analysis and synthesis of the messages of visual images' (p. 18). She adds that being comfortable with the concept of visual literacy enables teachers to engage in the processes of reading and writing visual texts and to incorporate these practices into the creation and implementation of visual literacy pedagogies across all subjects.

Another relevant study consisted of a two-year ethnographic project that investigated teachers' views on visual literacy in the English language arts classrooms in a Canadian middle school (Begoray, 2001). This research asked teachers to articulate how they included viewing and visually representing in their teaching strategies. Begoray (2001) reports that while the participants presented a positive attitude toward using visual materials in their lessons, and had many ideas for addressing visual literacy, they did not possess sufficient knowledge of how to incorporate the processes of viewing and representing

in their syllabus. The teachers expressed a lack of confidence in ways to implement visual literacy in the English language arts classroom.

Echoing studies on teachers' perspectives on visual literacy carried out in other parts of the world, Australia-based research on the topic focuses, in the main, on primary and secondary education, and in mainstream classrooms, rather than specifically in EAL, EFL or ESL – let alone in adult ELT. An example of such local research was conducted in the state of Tasmania by Atkins (2006) through an ethnographic study of three upper-primary school teachers who incorporated visual literacy within their core classroom program. The study explores primary school teachers' personal theories and beliefs about visual literacy, as well as factors which determine why they integrate visual literacy with their pedagogies. Findings suggest that teachers need to reassess the outcomes they aim to achieve in their literacy teaching and learning programs, so they can successfully foster a multiliterate, visual literacy mindset. Atkins (2006) maintains that this goal would only be possible if theoretical constructs of visual literacy were a core element in the curriculum in teacher training and if this were supported by educational policy that explicitly recognised the value of visual literacy.

The literature reviewed suggests limited attention to adult English language teachers' constructions of visual literacy in the context of adult ELT in Australia. In the following section, I explore the reasons why despite the prominent place ELICOS and Government-funded adult English language programs hold in Australia's education industry, research on visual literacy in these sectors receives limited attention, and it is thus not strongly represented at a theoretical level as has been the case in the primary and secondary sectors of schooling.

3.7 ELT practitioners researching their field

Seeking an explanation for the paucity in research on teachers' understandings of visual literacy in adult ELT in Australia, I took a step back to explore whether there is research activity in general among ELT practitioners. Again, I used literature at a global scale to then localise the search to Australia. For instance, Abbott et al. (2015) found in their study of 268 teachers across seven ELT associations in Canada that the teachers were not engaging extensively in research. The authors argue that adult English language teachers not only have restricted opportunities to access research through professional development programs, but also lack familiarity with conducting rigorous research. They suggest that teachers find academic publications 'difficult to access and understand, irrelevant to their teaching context, statistically complex, and excessively theoretical, dry, or uninteresting' (Abbott et

al., 2015, p. 85). Burns (2014) adds that unless it is for study purposes, busy teachers are not often motivated to read lengthy peer-reviewed journal articles.

One of the reasons for limited research activity in adult ELT is the fact that this industry's qualification requirements are much more relaxed than those of general education (i.e., primary or secondary school teaching) (Breshears, 2004). In Australia, teachers of both ELICOS and Government-funded adult migrant language programs come from a variety of educational backgrounds and with ranging levels of experience (see Table 2). Many of them arrive as ELT professionals by undertaking the minimum qualification required by many English language centres – the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) (Cambridge Assessment English, 2017). This course can be completed in 120 hours over four weeks. Other teachers have university degrees which qualify them to teach in primary and secondary schools, and some have completed postgraduate programs in TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of other languages).

Another major issue is that the research in the field of adult ELT tends to be fragmented (Roberts, 2006). Consistently, although the past three decades have seen a number of research studies addressing various aspects of curriculum design and pedagogies in adult migrant ELT (Brindley, 2000; Burns, 1996; Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2006; Burns & Hood, 1995; Wigglesworth, 2000), in Australia the body of literature on language and literacy programs for adult immigrants and refugees appears disjointed and underreported (Burns, 2006a; Murray, 2005). Furthermore, although ELICOS introduced an initiative to boost research activity by adult ELT practitioners – the *English Australia Action Research in ELICOS Program* (Brandon, 2015) – Burns (2015) reports that when the program was piloted in 2010 'the idea of research and conducting research within the ELICOS sector was completely new, even confronting, for many, and in some cases, colleagues' responses had been less than positive, seeing action research as going beyond the bounds of what they were paid for or disturbing the status quo' (p. 6).

Regardless of the initial underwhelming uptake on conducting research sponsored by the *Australia Action Research in ELICOS Program*, some institutions recognised the value of sharing strategies to address common concerns and innovative practices. As a result, in the first five years of the program 44 teachers from English language centres across the country undertook 30 projects exploring issues in ELICOS classroom practice (Brandon, 2015). Notably, in terms of the main concern of this study, a scan of abstracts of articles published under the *Australia Action Research in ELICOS Program*, indicates that visual literacy is yet to feature as a key area of interest in ELICOS research. The priority topics continue to be assessment, speaking, reading, writing (Burns, 2015) and learning-oriented

assessment and technology (English Australia, 2016a). This also appears to be the case in related and relevant publications such as *TESOL Quarterly* and the *English Australia Journal*.

3.8 Putting it all together

Understanding the relevant concepts, models and theories that inform a research study is a critical part of the research process (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Molasso, 2006). Such constructs form the theoretical grounding that influences many decisions a researcher makes in shaping the study's design, including the choice of methods and strategy of inquiry (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In qualitative research, theoretical foundations may include empirical or quasi-empirical theories of social processes that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena and which have been tested and validated (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Different scholars interpret what constitutes the theoretical foundation of a study in various ways. A review of several theses in preparation to writing this chapter indicated that while some researchers in education choose as their overarching theoretical framework a field encompassing numerous ideas – such as 'Literacy Studies' – or widely applied theories like 'constructivism', others extract from these broad areas a number of key concepts that are perhaps 'smaller' and more minutely focused. Some researchers also choose to visually represent how the theories and concepts they employ to frame their thinking align, connect, intersect and/or complement each other (Bryman, 2014; Clough & Nutbrown, 2007; Creswell, 2009).

In this study, I drew on the research and theory so far examined to make sense of certain aspects of the phenomenon being investigated, while justifying why less importance is placed on other elements (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). I employed my understanding of the concepts explored in the two literature review chapters to broaden my way of thinking about visual literacy and as a lens to take my research forward in terms of design and analysis, keeping in mind that although there are certain theories that are popular in different disciplines, there is rarely a theory or theoretical framework that will provide a 'perfect fit' for a study (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Molasso, 2006). In this section, I re-visit salient ideas from the literature review chapters, and highlight the key concepts and theories that have informed this inquiry. I begin by presenting my visual representation of how ideas at the centre of Literacy Studies and Cultural Studies frame my thinking of visual literacy in the specific context of adult ELT.

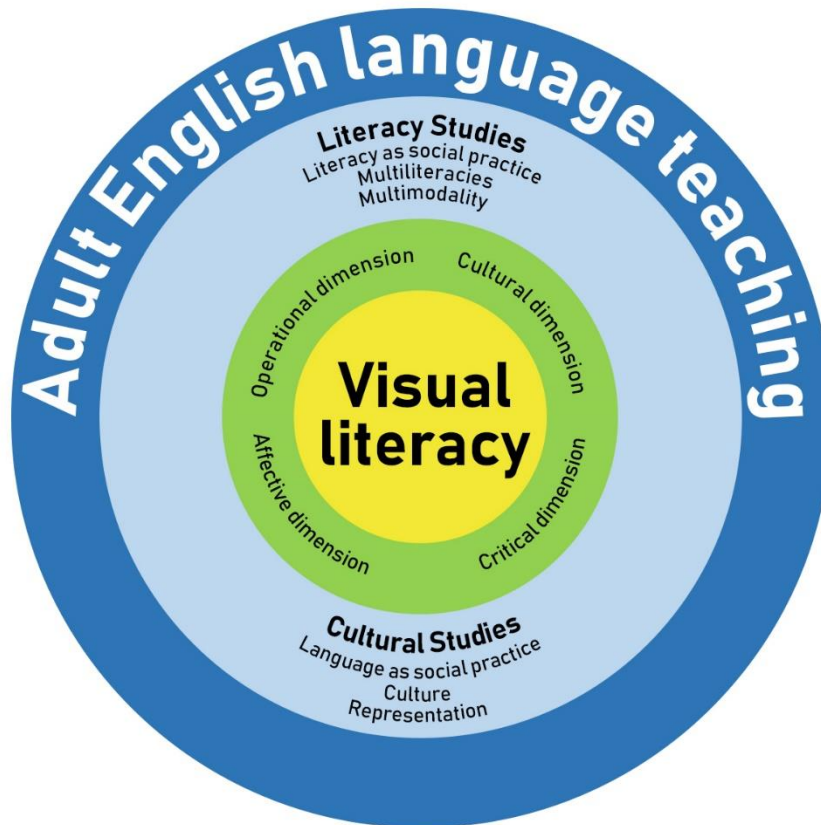


Figure 7. Visual representation of theories and concepts grounding the study

From the field of Literacy Studies, the notion of literacy as multiple, embedded in broader social and cultural practices (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984), and associated with different domains in life (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Street, 1993), has informed my perception of visual literacy as a plural set of social practices. These Literacy Studies’ principles interact with the understanding of culture and language as inherently linked to the context (Halliday, 2016) – characteristic of Cultural Studies views – and support the idea of culture as vital in a socially-situated view of literacy. Thus, the notion of the visual as a key element of culture, and as one of many semiotics 21st century people use to develop literacies and communicate (Serafini, 2017) is at the core of this study.

In terms of how the study of the dimensions of literacy assisted in interpreting the various views of the participating adult English language teachers, Green’s (1988, 2012b) 3D model provided a lens to frame my thinking about how different people conceptualise visual literacy. The operational dimension was concerned here with the processes involved in the interpretation and production of visual texts for meaning making. The cultural dimension looked into the participating English language teachers’ understandings of visual literacy within the social context of adult ELT, and how such views

were connected to their educational, professional and personal experiences. The critical dimension dealt with how these teachers understood visual texts and engaged with them in an analytical way, in order to incorporate them in their pedagogies and articulate how this usage affected their students' learning. In addition to the three dimensions, following Callow (2005), I incorporated affect as one of the four dimensions that frame adult English language teachers' conceptualisations of visual literacy, together with the various factors that have been identified as influencing their thinking and practices.

Understanding visual literacy as possessing an operational, cultural, critical and affective dimension intersects with the notion of Multiliteracies, which considers that texts are multimodal and embedded in different languages people use while operating in many socio-cultural contexts (The New London Group, 1996). The broader perspective of text and the idea that people can make meaning via multiple modes of representation – rather than only by reading printed media – (Hall, 1996) facilitates understanding of visual texts and sits at the centre of visual language and a visual culture. Recognising the importance of visual texts as equal to other texts (e.g., written, printed, digital) served as a platform for me to explore how adult English language teachers approached their own use of visual texts in their pedagogies and their rationales behind this practice.

Another important concept informing the study's design and analysis is representation (Du Gay et al., 1997; Hall, 1996, 2013; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). Understanding representation as how people make meaning in order to express their views of the world using a common language, helped me accord greater value to the participants' diverse and meaningful ways in which they articulated their perspectives on visual literacy and the use of visual texts in their classroom practices. Here, the interest Cultural Studies scholars show in understanding what groups of people think and do (Hall, 1980; 1990; Lewis, 2011) informed my approach to examining the study participants' conceptualisations of visual literacy, both as individuals and as members of an adult ELT culture.

Finally, exploring different intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence educators in the adult ELT profession, contributed to understanding how the participating adult English language teachers approached visual literacy. More specifically, I acknowledged that teacher beliefs, teaching approaches, purpose and teachers' roles in ELT, the context in which they work and their student audiences, might all influence the participants' teaching practices. This approach provided a space in which my study participants and I could reflect on what it was that made these educators choose to use a specific photograph, video or website for a particular lesson, as well as for what reason and with what objective. Importantly, my intention was not to ask the research participants how much they

'knew' about visual literacy, but rather what they thought about visual literacy in relation to their practices as adult English language teachers. I also wanted to find out how they saw visual texts fit within adult ELT, as well as if and how they employed them, recognising that their representations might be the result of both beliefs and knowledge gained through personal experience and professional practice.

3.9 Summary

In Chapter 3, I reviewed literature addressing intrinsic and external factors that affect teachers in the adult ELT field, seeking to understand how these elements may be linked to the ways in which the participating adult English language teachers approached the concept of visual literacy. The discussion examined perspectives on teacher beliefs, approaches to teaching, the purpose of ELT, the role of the educator, the teaching context, student audiences, and key ideas about adult teaching and learning. In the final section of the two literature review chapters (Chapters 2 and 3), I re-visited key concepts and theories stemming from the broad fields of Literacy Studies and Cultural Studies, which provide the theoretical grounding for this inquiry into visual literacy in adult ELT.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The concepts and theories guiding the study yielded the need for a research design founded on principles of qualitative research and conducted through a case study methodology (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). To help me define my philosophical stance when examining the diverse viewpoints of a group of adult English language teachers, I explored the concepts of qualitative research, a researcher's paradigm, their ontology and epistemology, as well as the role of reflexivity in the research. In this chapter, I explain my positioning as researcher, which is in essence, one of an adult English language teacher, who acknowledges the social contexts that shape the research participants' understandings and practices (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, I illustrate how the interpretive paradigm guided my inquiry, and explain the ontological and epistemological approaches which informed my methods of data collection – semi-structured interviews and focus groups – and thematic analysis for the reporting and exploration of the data.

As outlined earlier, the following three research questions guided the study and thus, informed my research design decisions:

1. How do adult English language teachers conceptualise visual literacy?
2. How do adult English language teachers describe their classroom practices in relation to the use of visual texts?
3. What shapes adult English language teachers' understanding of visual literacy and their use of visual texts in their classroom practices?

4.1 Qualitative research

The analogy below illustrates my rationale for engaging in qualitative research to achieve a complex and holistic picture of the individual meanings a group of people attributed to a common issue (Creswell, 2009):

Qualitative research is an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colours, different textures, and various blends of material (Creswell, 1998, p. 13).

Building on the understanding of qualitative research as an intricate and multilayered process, I endeavoured to work intensively and thoroughly through text data from a small number of participants and produce careful and detailed descriptions (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2008; Thomas,

2009), rather than relying on large amounts of numerical data, statistical analysis, measurements or frequencies – features typical of quantitative research (Mackey & Gass, 2005). My aim was to build a multifaceted narrative and uncover the many aspects of a problem. To achieve this, I employed processes typical of qualitative research. I formulated open questions about phenomena in their own context, rather than scheduling experiments to test predetermined hypotheses (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Flick, 2006). Then I gathered data directly and employed subjective judgements to bring the stories in these data to light, by finding patterns and connections, forming hypothetical categories and moving from specific facts to making analytic inferences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Importantly, flexibility played a key role in the study from the early stages of this ‘emergent design’ (Creswell, 2009). Despite careful planning, the design needed to evolve with the data collection in order to understand how visual literacy in adult ELT emerges in a unique social context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as ever-changing as adult ELT in Australia (Bundensen, 2011). Therefore, I began my research with three general concepts – literacy, visual literacy and ELT – and engaged in a cyclical and open-ended process where fine-tuning and narrowing of focus occurred throughout (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Flexibility allowed me to learn from my experiences during initial stages of the study and adapt subsequent steps.

4.2 An interpretivist worldview

In designing the study, I considered Denzin and Lincoln (2013)’s three essential interconnected elements in a qualitative research plan:

The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology), which are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways (p. 23).

The set of ideas Denzin and Lincoln (2013) refer to – the paradigm – is the catalyst to important judgements, such as what is a suitable approach to the inquiry, and what are the most fitting methods of data collection and analysis. The paradigm delineates ‘the intent, motivation and expectations of the research’ (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 194). It also underlies the researchers’ own ontology and epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), which refer to ‘what we know’ and ‘how we know it’ (Pitard, 2017, p. 1) respectively. I identified with an interpretivist research paradigm, which is founded on the following principle:

People perceive the world differently; therefore, reality is relative to each of us. Consequently, multiple constructions of reality exist, and these constructions can change over time as people engage socially in their world and become better informed (Agostinho, 2005, p. 5).

As Agostinho (2005) suggests, an interpretivist's understanding is that a person's particular view of the world determines their ways of seeing everything around them. Therefore, interpretivists perceive reality as 'socially constructed' (Hall, 2013; Mertens, 2005) through both shared and unique individual experiences (Hatch, 2002). In line with the interpretivist paradigm, I examined the participants' opinions and accounts of their practices, reporting and analysing them, as well as theorising from them through an inductive and constantly evolving process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

4.3 Relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology

For a reader to trust the standpoint of a researcher, the disclosure of their position in relation to the data is vital. This position is usually guided by philosophical beliefs developed through a lifetime of experiences, and which form a researcher's ontology and epistemology (Pitard, 2017). Thomas (2009) argues that 'the "ologies" strike fear into the hearts of many students' (p. 84), but acknowledges that thinking about them helps the researcher define their inquiry. Indeed, clarity around these notions helped me to reflect deeply about what I wanted to ask in my research questions and identify a suitable approach to answer them. Crotty (1998) labels ontology as 'the study of being' (p. 10) and epistemology as 'a way of understanding and explaining how I know what I know' (p. 3). In other words, ontology deals with the actual events that people observe from the social world, whereas epistemology is concerned with the ways in which people look at and explain these phenomena (Thomas, 2009).

This study relied on the participants' experiences, assumptions and opinions toward the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2009) – the position of visual literacy in adult ELT in Australia – and my close engagement with their responses to our interactions (Hatch, 2002). This approach fits within what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) call a 'relativist' ontology. From the relativist viewpoint 'reality *is* human experience and human experience *is* reality' (Levers, 2013, p. 2). In the study, the participants' accounts of their experiences and my analysis of these data are the source of the conclusions formed. How such conclusions are interpreted and applied in practice can potentially transform my own and the participants' personal and professional reality. In terms of *how* I view the perspectives shared by the study participants, my research aligns with a 'subjectivist' epistemology (Grix, 2004; Guba &

Lincoln, 1994), where knowledge is 'always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). In this study, knowledge of social phenomena was built upon my own and the participating teachers' awareness of these phenomena, as well as our judgements as researcher and participants.

4.4 Strategy of inquiry: A case study approach

'Strategies of inquiry' (Bryman, 2012; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), 'research methodologies' (Creswell, 2009; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mertens, 2005), or 'approaches to inquiry' (Creswell, 2009) are designs or models that guide the direction for procedures in a research study and influence the choice of data collection and analysis methods. A strategy of inquiry consists of a set of skills, assumptions, and practices that the researcher engages with in order to link their paradigm with their understanding of the empirical world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). In other words, strategies of inquiry help transform worldviews, beliefs and opinions into relevant applications in the researchers' environment.

The case study, defined by Yin (2009) as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context' (p. 18), provided me with a suitable plan of action. Case study research relies on detailed descriptions of the setting, phenomena and/or individuals and on analysis of the data for common themes, recurring patterns, or salient issues (Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1994). It also allows flexibility to incorporate data generated from complementary sources, such as interviews, focus groups and various types of documents (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Although the term 'case' is commonly associated with a person, site, community or organisation, almost any kind of research can be structured as a case study (e.g., a school or family, a famous individual, an event or a community of practice) (Bryman, 2014). Furthermore, the case study is often understood not as a strategy of inquiry but as a method of writing or reporting the results of interpretivist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bryman (2014) argues that what makes a case study unique is the researcher's interest in uncovering the particular features of the case, which is a system bounded by its scope, time and place.

4.4.1 Scope, setting and participants

This research examines a multi-site case study of 15 adult English language teachers across five education institutions that deliver adult English language programs in the Melbourne metropolitan area. The case included teachers in English language centres that provided either one or both major

program types offered to contrasting cohorts of adult learners: (1) Government-funded English language programs for adult refugees, immigrants and/or their families, and (2) ELICOS programs aimed at tertiary overseas students. This selection of educators enabled exploring a range of views on visual literacy within the two sectors. Table 1 (below) describes the sites in which the participating educators practised adult ELT, including the target student audiences in each English language centre and the course(s) each participant was teaching at the time of data collection. Then Table 2 provides detailed information about the level of education of the participants, including both pre-service ELT-specific training programs and any other type of formal qualification. In addition, it outlines the length of their experience teaching English language to adults. To maintain confidentiality, I replaced the names of the participants with pseudonyms.

Table 1. Research participants and description of the English language centres (research sites)

Site	Description of site	Teacher pseudonym	Currently teaching
Site 1 ELICOS Centre (1 teacher)	Registered ELICOS centre for international students, attached to a university. Most students are on a pathway to undergraduate, postgraduate or vocational studies.	Muriel	ELICOS English for academic purposes (EAP) to intermediate and advanced international students.
Site 2 ELICOS Centre (5 teachers)	Registered ELICOS centre for international students, attached to a university. Most students are on a pathway to undergraduate, postgraduate or vocational studies.	Georgie	ELICOS EAP to beginner to advanced international students. Also coordinates the site's independent learning centre.
		Jacob	ELICOS EAP to intermediate and advanced international students.
		Kylie	ELICOS EAP to lower intermediate and intermediate international students.
		Lola	ELICOS EAP to advanced international students.
		Mercedes	ELICOS EAP to upper intermediate and advanced international students. Also trains EAL teachers.
Site 3 Government-funded English Language programs provider (1 teacher)	Registered multi-site provider of settlement services for refugees and migrants. These include on-arrival settlement support, English language and literacy training, vocational training and employment services.	Hermione	AMEP General English (GE) to migrants and refugees. One-on-one via online distance learning.
Site 4 Government-funded English language programs provider	Registered multi-site training organisation for adults with limited English language literacy in the not for profit sector. Its main audiences are migrant-	Allegra	AMEP GE to very low L1 literacy migrants and refugees, and SEE (Skills for Employment and Education) to low intermediate migrants.

(6 teachers)	background residents at the beginning of their education pathway.	Jordan	SEE (Skills for Employment and Education) to low intermediate migrants.
		Jenny	AMEP GE to very low L1 literacy migrants and refugees, SEE to low intermediate, and certificate 1 in vocational preparation.
		Lili	AMEP GE to very low L1 literacy migrants and refugees.
		Lourdes	Pre-AMEP content based courses for low literacy migrants and refugees.
		Winnifred	Pre-AMEP bilingually assisted courses for specific cohorts of very low literacy migrants and refugees.
Site 5 ELICOS and Government- funded English language programs provider (2 teachers)	Registered multi-campus tertiary level training institute. Delivers TAFE, and undergraduate programs, as well as ELICOS and Government-funded adult English language programs.	Anastasia	ELICOS. English for specific academic purposes (ESP). Advanced prospective nursing international students.
		Julian	AMEP GE to pre-intermediate migrants and refugees. Also trains teachers.

Table 2. Research participants' qualifications and adult ELT experience

Teacher pseudonym	Qualification(s) and background	Years teaching
Allegra	Graduate Diploma in Secondary education (LOTE Spanish and ESL), Master of Education (TESOL/and Applied Linguistics), Cert IV in Training and Assessment	8
Anastasia	Bachelor of Arts (Italian Literature and Language), Master in International Health	25
Georgie	Trinity Diploma in TESOL (four week duration), Master in Applied Linguistics (TESOL stream)	9
Hermione	Bachelor of Arts (Linguistics, ESL and English), Graduate Diploma of Education in TESOL, Diploma of Counselling, TAFE course in secretarial studies	30
Jacob	Bachelor of Arts, Master in History, CELTA, DELTA	10
Jenny	Bachelor of Visual Arts, Graduate Diploma of Secondary Education (ESL and Visual Arts)	7
Jordan	B. Arts and Law (Anthropology major), M. Anthropology, Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) ESL method, began PhD in Anthropology	8
Julian	Bachelor of Arts, Preparatory Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults	30
Kylie	Master in Education (ESL), CELTA, Short course in creative methodologies	10
Lili	Bachelor of Teaching (primary), Master of TESOL	2
Lola	Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film, CELTA, Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning	8
Lourdes	CELTA, Postgraduate Certificate in TESOL	16
Mercedes	Bachelor of Arts in Romance Languages (Spanish), Master of Applied Linguistics (TESOL), CELTA	10
Muriel	Bachelor of Psychology, Graduate Diploma in TESOL	10
Winnifred	CELTA, Master of TESOL, Cert IV in Training and Assessment	5

4.4.2 Participant recruitment

In this section, I describe the strategies and procedures used to recruit participants for the study. Recruitment and data collection instruments and procedures were designed in compliance with and approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) guidelines for research involving human participants (See MUHREC's Approval letter in Appendix 4).

4.4.2.1 Participant selection strategy and finding the research sites

The initial step in the recruitment process was to identify sites which delivered ELICOS, Government-funded English language programs or both. A key purposive sampling criterion (Bryman, 2014) was that all participants needed to be current teachers of adult English language programs. Criteria such as demographics, education or training background and professional experience were unrestrictive, given my search for variety rather than uniformity amongst participants. For convenience and accessibility, only participants teaching in language centres based in the Melbourne metropolitan area were invited. A search for English language centres in the state of Victoria via the website of English Australia – the national body for the English language sector of international education in Australia (English Australia, 2016b) – returned 24 sites which provide ELICOS courses, either independently or attached to a high school, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institution or university (See Appendix 5).

Finding providers of Government-funded English language programs was more complex, given that they operate from learning centres, community centres, universities and VET institutions. Also, it was not clear what programs were offered at each site; that is, in addition to the main adult federal government funded program – the Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) (Martin, 2000). Thus, I searched in the Department of Education and Training's website for AMEP service providers (Department of Education and Training, 2016) in order to ascertain where this program was offered in Melbourne, and to investigate what other English language courses they provided. This search returned 38 AMEP providers, indicating a large potential population of participants (See Appendix 6).

With a total of 62 identified research sites, and potentially hundreds of teachers, the next required step was to filter this population. Following Arcury and Quandt's (1999) guidelines, I decided to narrow the list down to those sites in which I could contact the 'gate-keeper' (p. 129); in this case, this would be a manager, senior educator or director of studies. The support and approval of these senior staff was required since I would be asking their teachers for time to participate in interviews and focus

group discussions. Using the centres' webpages, I obtained the contact details of 16 site leaders out of the 62 institutions. More specifically, the staff pages in nine ELICOS providers, six Government-funded English language programs providers and two sites which offered both, publicly displayed their leader's position, email and postal addresses. Informed by my knowledge of the ELT industry and comments from colleagues who had worked at some of these institutions, I calculated that between the 16 providers, the population would be anywhere between 160 and 200 teachers.

4.4.2.2 Inviting site leaders and teachers

Following this filtering process, and taking into consideration what Bryman (2014) calls 'the messiness of social research' (p. 13) – which can occur when a study gathers large amounts of qualitative data – I opted for a staggered recruitment process. This assisted me in reaching a diverse, but contained population of teachers. I sent letters to five institution leaders, expecting to recruit between three and five teachers per site, for a maximum total of 25. This is consistent with the number of research sites in a case study, loosely recommended by Creswell (2006). I invited two ELICOS providers, two AMEP providers, and one which offers both streams. I hoped that my topic would be of interest to the site leaders who received my explanatory letter, but was also aware that unsolicited correspondence is often opened last, if at all.

The first mail out resulted in two site leaders expressing interest in participating. Then, after a second and third round of letters and follow up emails, a total of seven out of the 16 contacted senior staff replied favourably either via email or phone call. In the explanatory statement, I asked them for permission to conduct research within their workplace and to disseminate my invitation among their teachers. The letters also included a recruitment poster targeting ELICOS and AMEP teachers, briefly explaining the project and asking them to contact me if interested in participating. Following communication from their leaders, nine teachers contacted me. Subsequently, I emailed them detailed explanatory statements and consent forms, and began negotiation for meeting dates. During the one-on-one interviews, some of the participants became very enthusiastic about the study and said they would encourage their colleagues to partake. This resulted in an additional six teachers contacting me, for a total of 15 participants. This technique, whereby participants in a study propose or recruit other potential participants who have the required criteria, is known as 'snowball sampling' (Bryman, 2014, p. 415; David & Sutton, 2011, p. 232) (See Appendix 7 for the recruitment poster and Appendix 8 for a data collection timeline).

4.5 Methods of data collection

Data collection is the point at which, once a broad design frame for the study is established, the researcher employs the best tools to bring together the data required. These tools are the appropriate instruments, processes and techniques used to gather information, in order to make sense of a particular issue (Burns, 1997; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). In this study, two methods of data collection were employed: semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews and focus groups. The focus groups were activity-oriented and designed using a ‘photo-elicitation’ technique (Moss & Pini, 2016) called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Yenawine, 2014). In this section, I explain the key features of these methods, offer my rationale behind the decision to employ them and illustrate how I implemented them in the study.

4.5.1 Qualitative interviews

Aware of the advantages and limitations of this methodology (explained below), I employed semi-structured interviews to invite the participating teachers to reflect on the general notion of literacy and how they connected this to more specific concepts and ideas, such as visual literacy and the use of visual texts in adult ELT. This interaction provided a platform for the participants to explain and articulate in their own words the impact their views have on their everyday teaching practices. Also, questions addressing their educational and professional experiences helped me build an understanding of how their life stories shaped their teaching practices in relation to the topic of the study.

The term ‘qualitative interview’ (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Dixon, Singleton, & Straits, 2016; Kvale, 1996), often used interchangeably with ‘in-depth interview’ (Bryman, 2014) or ‘intensive interview’ (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006), commonly refers to interviews used in qualitative research. The interview is considered by many scholars the most advantageous method in research where depth of meaning is imperative and the study is primarily focused on gaining insight into and understanding of someone’s opinions or attitudes (Bryman, 2014; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Thomas, 2009).

4.5.1.1 Features of semi-structured interviews

One of the most appealing features I found in semi-structured interviews was their flexibility (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2008; Thomas, 2009). This method of data collection allowed me to remain

focused on particular interests, whilst keeping ‘an open mind about the shape of what [I needed] to know about’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 10), and welcoming emerging phenomena in the research, rather than having to adhere strictly to ‘ready-made frameworks or categories’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 32). Semi-structured interviews provided the study with the rigour of a series of questions (varying their sequencing when required) and adaptability, in order to digress, probe, ‘ramble’ and follow up, without the need for standardisation of the interview process (Bryman, 2014; Creswell, 2009; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

It is important to note that the information obtained via interviews is filtered through the views of the participants, who may not be equally articulate and perceptive, and that the responses may be biased due to the researcher’s presence (Creswell, 2009). Here is where the effectiveness of such an intimate interaction will depend significantly on the interpersonal and communication skills of the interviewer (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). These skills include the abilities to: a) establish rapport with participants (Dixon et al., 2016); b) clearly structure questions (Cohen et al., 2011); c) listen attentively and facilitate responses (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007); and d) ‘pause, probe or prompt appropriately’ (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 141).

4.5.1.2 Interview procedures

To prepare for the semi-structured interviews, after becoming familiar with the contexts in which the participants were teaching, I followed three steps suggested by Bryman (2014). First, I outlined broad topic categories, so the questions in each category would flow cohesively. The two main categories addressed were: a) the participants’ context and story of how they became ‘the English language teachers they are today’; b) their interpretations of concepts of literacy, visual literacy and the use of visual texts in their classroom practices. Second, I formulated a list of open-ended interview questions (Bryman, 2014; Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2012) explicitly related to the research questions, but using relevant, clear language, and avoiding leading questions. Finally, I pre-empted participants’ questions that could arise during the interviews, preparing compelling answers, in particular to the purpose and procedures of my study.

Since the interview acts as ‘a bridge between the two sides’ (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 123) – the researcher and the interviewees – it is essential to pilot the questions, in order to avoid transmitting inaccurate or irrelevant information. With the advantage of having willing and interested colleagues (ELICOS teachers) and supervisors (academic program managers and a director of studies) at my workplace, I pre-tested not only the interview schedule, but also the recruitment posters, letters and

explanatory statements. This trial assisted me in assessing whether the research design was suitable and practical, and could ensure the likelihood of successful participant recruitment. Since none of these pilot participants were involved in the actual study, I was also able to ask for honest and detailed feedback on ambiguities and difficult interview questions. Furthermore, this experience allowed me to identify the most suitable voice recording device, which turned out to be the iPhone, as opposed to a digital recorder.

A total of 15 individual audio-recorded interviews lasting 45 to 50 minutes took place at different times that suited the teachers (e.g., during teaching breaks in the morning or afternoon, and after hours). I conducted eleven of the sessions at the participants' workplaces, three at cafés and one at a participant's home. The semi-structured format facilitated collection of information about their experiences and practices in a consistent manner, while I was able to invite them to elaborate on particular points (Mackey & Gass, 2005) (See interview questions in Appendix 9, and a full transcript of a sample interview in Appendix 14).

4.5.2 Focus groups

Also a form of interviewing, focus groups are structured discussions among a small group of participants regarding a specific problem (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). This second method of data collection provided the great advantage of bringing multiple views to light simultaneously (Carey & Smith, 1994), probing into how the participating teachers made sense of visual texts and their understanding of how their students might engage with these. While the group views contributed to answering my research questions, I remained aware that qualitative focus groups are not representative of the general population (Vicsek, 2010), but they may be helpful to ratify or build upon other data or theory.

A key benefit of the focus group method is that group dynamics may enhance the likelihood of participants speaking frankly about the subject in discussion (Cyr, 2016; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Vaughn et al., 1996). Assuming that the data obtained from each individual participant is genuine information, this frank contribution contrasts with the notion that group interviews may lead participants to consensus in which people conform to others' beliefs. The group dynamics helped me ascertain if participants interpreted a question in similar ways and if they shared common views. Notwithstanding the advantages of focus groups, I took into consideration certain reservations exposed by Bryman (2014). The first was regarding the level of control over proceedings that the researcher may have. As moderator I had to think carefully about how involved I needed to be and

the impact my questions could have on the group. Secondly, I recognised that focus groups tend to generate large amounts of data in a short time, which could potentially become very time consuming to transcribe and difficult to analyse. Finally, I needed to be aware that logistics could be an issue, not only when trying to get all participants to meet at the same time and place, but also if two or more of them presented a tendency to speak simultaneously.

In terms of the number of focus groups participants in social research, six to ten people form the ideal number (Morgan, 1997). Nevertheless, groups composed by experts on a topic or ‘Delphi groups’ (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 139) may have only four participants, as they often have a lot to contribute. With this in mind, given that all the interviewed participants had substantial experience in the adult ELT field, I hoped to orchestrate three focus groups to which to allocate the 15 teachers. However, I needed to consider the logistics this would require, as the participating teachers worked in various sites across Melbourne and had expressed they would be unable to travel. Thus, in order to make these meetings accessible and still collect rich data, I decided to invite all colleagues from sites 2 and 3, and explained that the focus groups would be held at their workplaces. The understanding that in focus groups where people know each other, members tend to feel more at ease to participate actively in the discussion as long as it is not about sensitive or personal issues (David & Sutton, 2011), helped my decision. Table 3 illustrates the two resulting focus groups.

Table 3. Distribution of focus groups participants

Site	Number of teachers in the study	Number of teachers who participated	
1 - ELICOS	1		
2 - ELICOS	5 invited	4	Focus group 1
3 - Gov. funded	6 invited	4	Focus group 2
4 - Gov. funded	1		
5 - ELICOS and Gov. funded	2		

4.5.2.1 Activity-oriented focus groups

Colucci (2007) affirms that focus groups ‘offer the ideal setting to make participants “do” something and answer questions in a more active way, taking the discussion more in-depth and in a potentially more enjoyable way’ (p. 124). Thus, I investigated activity-oriented questions that could help elicit and

promote discussion while keeping the group's attention on the core topic of the study (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). Examples of these questions in a focus group include: rating items on a scale (Bernard, 1995), choosing among alternatives, describing pictures, role-playing (Krueger, 1998) and storytelling (Colucci, 2007). I thought an activity of this sort could be conducive to engaging all participants, particularly those who might be less comfortable with immediate verbal responses and need extra time to formulate their ideas.

I wanted to give each individual an opportunity to explore and share how their engagement with visual texts in a focus group environment could reflect their teaching practices. This motive, and the fact that visual literacy is the centrepiece of this study, inspired me to use visual texts as a springboard to elicit collective information that could potentially enrich the data obtained individually via the interviews, while providing a platform for all present in the focus group to have a voice (Colucci, 2007). To elucidate how I achieved this, below I provide a brief description of 'visual research methodology' and explain the concept of 'photo-elicitation' (Bryman, 2014; Holm, 2008; Prosser, 2007).

4.5.2.2 Visual research methodology

The use of visual methods in sociology has its foundations in the 1960s, when ethnographic films became widespread and were rapidly produced (Hockings, 2003; Moss & Pini, 2016; Warren & Karner, 2005). The idea of a visual methodological framework emerged to 'enhance the status and acceptability of image-based research in the wider research community . . . and to improve the status of image-based research in the eyes of orthodox word orientated qualitative researchers' (Prosser, 1996, p. 25). Today, the notion of visual methodology is widely used in qualitative studies and extends to research in a range of fields, including anthropology, sociology, education and health sciences (Prosser & Loxley, 2007). In addition to using photographs, it includes a range of multimodal texts, which combine two or more communication modes, such as printed texts, still or moving images and spoken words, and are accessed through different online media and sophisticated technologies (Bryman, 2014; Holm, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Pink, 2005; Prosser & Loxley, 2007).

Depending on their origin, visual texts in visual research are traditionally classified as 'pre-existing', 'subject-produced' (Warren & Karner, 2005, p. 171) or 'researcher-produced' (Holm, 2008, p. 327). In terms of their purpose, Bryman (2014) denotes that qualitative researchers use visual texts in different ways: as reminding notes throughout field work, as valid pieces of key information in their own right, or as a topic of discussion for participants. Today, researchers can take advantage of a vast digital repository of ready-made still and moving images available through web-based search engines (e.g.,

Google) and pictorial-based social media, such as Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat and Tumblr (Callahan, 2015). Furthermore, teachers such as the participants, often employ these media in their classroom. Therefore, through the method called 'photo-elicitation', I incorporated into the focus groups the use of pre-existing visual texts that could be easily accessed.

4.5.2.3 Photo-elicitation

The strategy of gathering information from participants by means of photographs in qualitative interviewing is called 'photo-elicitation' (Bryman, 2014, p. 452; Holm, 2008, p. 328; Moss & Pini, 2016; Prosser, 2007, p. 22) or 'photo interviewing' (Collier, 2001, p. 45). Photographs are often included in a research study for their potential in awakening participants' memories of a particular subject (e.g., a person or event), generally using two approaches: the 'realist' and the 'reflexive' (Pink, 2001). A traditional realist framework sees photographs as facts for the researcher to interpret along with their other data. In contrast, the reflexive approach requires mindfulness and sensitivity to the ways in which the researcher's and the informant's background, views and experiences may have contributed to the resulting image.

Through the focus groups I wanted to elicit additional information about the participants' views, opinions, experiences and beliefs. Visual texts assisted in achieving this goal, as they served as a catalyst for dialogue (Bryman, 2014; Collier, 2001) about the meaning and significance each visual text represented to each teacher. Thus, I approached my use of visual texts from Harper's (2003) viewpoint: 'The power of the photo lies in its ability to unlock the subjectivity of those who see the image differently from the researcher' (p. 195). I adopted a reflexive approach to photo-elicitation, conscious that the participants' views might be diverse, regardless of the subjects depicted in a photograph, illustration or video.

Photo-elicitation and focus groups have in common the flexibility they allow to participants. The former welcomes participants' 'open-ended reading' (Collier, 2001, p. 45) of visual texts. Similarly, the latter encourages a natural flow in the discussion by using a reasonably small number of general questions as a guide. The advantage of this plasticity was that through observing what appeared to be digressions, I gained access to what participants viewed as important or interesting (Bryman, 2014). Importantly, I recognised that in order to foster rich but relevant discussion I needed a structure that would keep the conversation focused but would not result in the participants seeing me as an intrusion inhibiting dialogue. I found this in Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Yenawine, 2014).

4.5.2.4 Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

VTS is a pedagogic method developed at New York City’s Museum of Modern Art in 1991 in response to the need to ascertain what visitors were learning from its education programs, with the intent of building visual literacy. VTS is documented to have a positive effect on both teachers and students of various disciplines and ages (Housen & Yenawine, 2001). VTS consists of teacher-facilitated discussions of visual texts that assist in fostering thinking skills, oral and written language literacy, visual literacy, and collaborative interactions, all of which become habitual and transfer from lesson to lesson. Although the purpose of my focus groups was not to *teach* the teachers, VTS seemed to be a suitable strategy to facilitate, as Yenawine (2014) states, ‘an equal playing field...[where] they (participants) [could] express their thoughts and ideas in a safe situation and feel valued and supported’ (p. 36). A typical VTS session consists of the following process (Table 4), which can last up to 60 minutes, depending on the number of participants and their language skills (Yenawine, 2014).

Table 4. Typical VTS procedure.

Adapted from Yenawine, 2014, *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using art to deepen learning across school disciplines*, pp. 173-175, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Step	Instruction
1. Introduction of the image	Participants are asked to look closely and quietly at the image for one minute.
2. Opening	The facilitator begins with: “What’s going on in this picture?”
3. Paraphrasing of responses	The facilitator summarises responses using conditional language (“John thinks this could be...”). This keeps the discussion open to different interpretations by other participants.
4. Probing	When fitting, the facilitator asks: “What do you see that makes you say that?” to encourage participants to support their statements with things they see in the image.
5. Keep the flow of the conversation	The facilitator asks the group: “What more can we find?” in order to continue the conversation.
6. Closing	To close, the facilitator thanks participants and names positive behaviours.

I visited Heide Museum of Art in Melbourne, in order to understand at first-hand how educators there utilised this method to engage their learners of various disciplines – including EAL – with paintings and sculptures. With no right or wrong answers, the teachers’ aim was to encourage even the most cautious student to feel comfortable, confident and free to participate. This was the environment I wanted to foster in the focus groups for my study. I subsequently designed an activity-oriented focus group that combined features of VTS and photo-elicitation, with the aim of consolidating ideas about

the language that different people use to discuss visual texts. I was also curious to see who would take advantage of the extensive range of visual texts available today online, such as photographs, advertisements, cartoons, charts, diagrams, graphs, memes, signs, slide shows and videos (Finley, 2014). Therefore, instead of presenting the participants with pre-selected existing photographs or videos to discuss, I gave them the opportunity to represent an idea with visual texts of their choice – a practice that they had all expressed as being customary in their pedagogies.

4.5.2.5 Focus groups procedures

Prior to the meetings, I asked teachers to bring a device they could use to access the Internet (e.g., smartphone, tablet, laptop). I reminded them that I would be using my iPhone to audio-record the discussions, assuring them that their names would be replaced by pseudonyms in transcripts, the dissertation and any other publication in which I might use these data. On the day, I explained that the rationale for this exercise was to expand our understanding of English language teachers' conceptions of visual literacy in a practical way, that is, by exploring how we made sense of visual texts and how our students could engage with these. Following this explanation, I asked each participant to take five minutes to search online on their devices for visual texts which illustrated the word 'community' and to put forward for discussion the one each found most evocative of this concept.

In discussions with my PhD supervisors about our experiences as educators, we agreed that the notion of 'community' seems to resonate well among English language teachers, as it brings ideas related to communicating with peers and learning about the community in which we live. Therefore, I chose this as the topic of the focus groups discussion around visual texts. Although I refer to different kinds of still and moving images as visual texts throughout this study, I specifically asked the focus groups participants to select 'visual representations' rather than 'images', in order to avoid bias toward photographs, illustrations, videos, etc. and to remind them that this exercise was about how *they* would represent a concept. I was very interested in exploring what diverse individual visual representations of the same concept might look like, given that, generally, people tend to identify the word 'community' with community affiliations and social units, such as the home, family, school and work (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Notwithstanding the countless available options online, all participants chose to represent 'community' with still photographs or illustrations, which they found through a search on Google Images (Official Google Blog, 2010). This response is consistent with Bryman's (2014) view, reporting that photography is the visual medium that has received the greatest attention among visual

researchers (See Appendix 10 for the visual texts chosen and discussed by the participants). Following the VTS procedure, and using each photograph or illustration put forward by the four participants in each focus group as stimuli, helped me remain in the role of neutral facilitator (David & Sutton, 2011) (See Appendix 11 for the focus groups questions, and Appendix 15 for excerpts of the transcript from the ELICOS focus group). While eliciting spontaneous expression of the participants' interpretation of their chosen visual texts of the word 'community' and related opinions and observations, I kept the discussion focused on relevant issues.

The first part of the conversation, which was on the photographs or illustrations themselves, invoked diverse meanings related to the teachers' social, political, cultural and professional contexts. They sometimes shared similar interpretations of the visual texts, and at other times, these views were contrasting. Also comments on each other's points of view reflected how their interpretations were not limited to discussing how the visual texts were constructed (e.g., composition, style, medium). Comments included expressions about their appreciation for the aesthetic value of a particular photograph, whether they felt any emotional connection to it, and if they liked or disliked it.

4.6 Trustworthiness of the case study

Trustworthiness in qualitative research alludes to how an inquirer can persuade their audiences that their findings are worth taking into account (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rolfe, 2006). Bryman (2014) points out that trustworthiness in case studies is often concerned with whether the findings and implications are applicable to a wider population, since this methodology often recruits only a few systematically selected participants (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Trustworthiness in case studies can be built upon clear documentation of how the research went from research question to conclusion, and reinforced by details of how the concepts, theories and relationships that formed the study were addressed and of how they related to the findings (Yin, 2009). Thus, I have provided an honest and transparent account of the data, and have documented carefully and comprehensively the processes followed from the initial research question to the final conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore, based on the research inquiry processes that scholars in diverse disciplines suggest contribute productively to the overall quality in case studies (Bryman, 2014; Farquhar & Michels, 2015; Guba, 1981; Rolfe, 2006; Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2009), I employed the following measures:

Table 5. Measures I took to ensure trustworthiness and overall quality in the case study

Measure	Application in the study
Developing early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarised myself with the English language centres where participants were recruited from, their different offerings in terms of ELICOS, Government-funded English language programs or both and their teacher and student populations. • Identified potential key players in the research through industry peak bodies, such as the Victoria Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) and English Australia.
Establishing clear criteria for selection of research participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sought to listen to multiple voices, in order to gain greater knowledge of the much wider group of teachers of adult English language programs in Melbourne (Stake, 1995). • Established a clear strategy for selection of research sites and participants, employing non-restrictive criteria in terms of age, qualifications and level of professional experience.
Immersing deeply in the data through different methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed two different sets of data, obtained through individual interviews and focus groups (Abbott et al., 2015; Guba, 1981). • Identified common themes amongst the different data sources, which supported theorisation from the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). • Immersed in rigorous data analysis, coding by patterns, common thoughts, actions, words, phrases and events (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009), aiming for in-depth understanding of the context, individuals, phenomena and events in the study (Creswell, 2009).
Piloting the study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trialled research instruments prior to data collection to identify potential pitfalls in the project, for instance, to see whether methods of recruitment or data collection were inappropriate or too complex (Baker, 1994; Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). • Piloting the interview schedule, established if the questions were clear, understandable and capable of eliciting relevant responses to the research questions; adjustments were made as required.
Implementing strategies to help ensure honesty in participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approached leaders in potential research sites and gave them the option to refuse to participate in the study. Data collection involved only those who were genuinely willing to participate and prepared to offer data freely. • Participants in interviews and focus groups were encouraged to be frank and assured that there were no right answers. • Emphasised my independent status as a researcher and PhD candidate, maintained participants' confidentiality, and assigned them pseudonyms, so that they felt free to express ideas and talk about their experiences without fear of losing credibility in the eyes of managers in their workplace. • Informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. These strategies followed Monash University's Research Ethics Committee guidelines (See Appendices 1 for Invitation letters, 2 for Explanatory statement and 3 for Consent form).
Debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadened and challenged my vision and positionality as an investigator (Berger, 2015; Shenton, 2004) through discussion with my thesis supervisors and other researchers. • Used these collaborative sessions to learn from others' experiences, discuss alternative approaches and attend to flaws in the proposed course of action. • The researcher debriefing with my supervisors also provided a sounding board to test emerging ideas and understanding of relevant literature.
Examining of previous research findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through an in-depth literature review, assessed the degree to which the project's findings – in light of the proposed theoretical framework – were congruent with those of past studies within the researched area (Silverman, 2001).

4.7 Reflexivity and positionality in the study

Reflexivity has been increasingly recognised as an important element in the process of generating knowledge (Ahmed Dunya, Lewando, & Blackburn, 2011; Berger, 2015; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizion, 2009; Koch & Harrington, 1998). In the qualitative research process, reflexivity is central to establishing 'positionality' (Berger, 2015; Burck, 2005; Pitard, 2017); that is, the researcher's personal stance in relation to the subject being studied. It involves the researcher's constant internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation (Herr, 2015). Reflexivity is particularly important when the issues investigated originate from the researchers' personal experience with what is being studied, as it helps their awareness of the probability of their stance influencing the research process and thus its outcomes (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Stronach, Garratt, & Pearce, 2007).

Reflexivity helps the researcher understand the possible ways in which they have an impact they on the research (Berger, 2015). For instance, the researchers' position may affect the access they can have to people in the field being investigated, as participants in a study may share their experiences more openly with a researcher whom they see as sympathetic to their own circumstances. A researcher who is already in the field of study may also be better informed about potentially useful resources. Furthermore, the researcher's position may shape their relationship with the 'researched', affecting the quality and depth of the information that participants are willing to share (Berger, 2015). In addition, the researcher's background in the subject affects the way in which they formulate questions and analyse data gathered from participants, which, in turn, shapes the findings and outcomes of the study (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006).

Reflexivity in this study helped me understand that my own experiences informed my concern for how other teachers incorporated visual literacy in adult ELT. This concern prompted me to examine visual literacy, ELT and adult education combined, within the rigour of doctoral research, with emphasis on educators' views and from the stance of an ELICOS practising teacher and researcher. Having taught English language to adult overseas students in an English language centre for a number of years, I positioned myself as an educator and researcher investigating views comparable to those of my study participants, who are also adult ELT practitioners. This position enabled me to bring forth personal connections to the research, including my interest in contributing to knowledge and practice in my professional field. I also recognised from the outset that prior to embarking on the research process I possessed very limited knowledge of visual literacy, and suspected that I held very similar views on my rationale for employing visual texts in my adult ELT classroom to those of the participating teachers.

4.8 The analytic process

The analytic process in qualitative research is ‘an interweaving of inductive and deductive thinking’ (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 98). In other words, qualitative data analysis is the pivotal phase in a study in which the researcher organises, summarises, structures and gives meaning to the large amounts of data usually collected. The researcher starts with a large dataset working toward narrowing it down to smaller more digestible key sections of data. Deciding on an analytic approach is an important issue that defines how this entire process is carried out (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008; Silverman, 2001).

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) suggest that regardless of which data analysis method is adopted, the key goal in the process should be to uncover ‘significant classes or sets of things, persons, and events and the properties that characterise them’ (p. 98) in the study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) suggest that the data analysis process should be conducted in four steps, illustrated in Figure 8. These steps are: 1) reviewing the data looking for overarching ideas; 2) coding large amounts of data into categories and reducing it to manageable sections; 3) reporting the findings; and 4) making sense of the findings.

4.8.1 Thematic analysis

Defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) as ‘a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data’, thematic analysis provided me with an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach to my analysis, which assisted me in building a detailed and complex account of the data. Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research, as it is considered conducive to scrutinising and describing qualitative data in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Namey et al., 2008; Tuckett, 2005). Braun and Clarke outline six key steps in thematic analysis. These are: ‘1) familiarising yourself with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing the themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Below, I explain how I have applied this six-phase system in the study.

4.8.1.1 Phases of the thematic analysis in the study

During Phase 1 – familiarising oneself with the data – I listened to each of the 15 interviews and two focus groups once, writing down my general observations about what I found particularly interesting from each participating teacher’s experiences and opinions. While listening, I read the interviews and focus groups transcripts, which I obtained through a professional service to minimise time spent going

through over 600 minutes of verbal data. I read all the transcripts and listened again, checking for accuracy, taking further notes and writing a list of general ideas I wanted to explore.

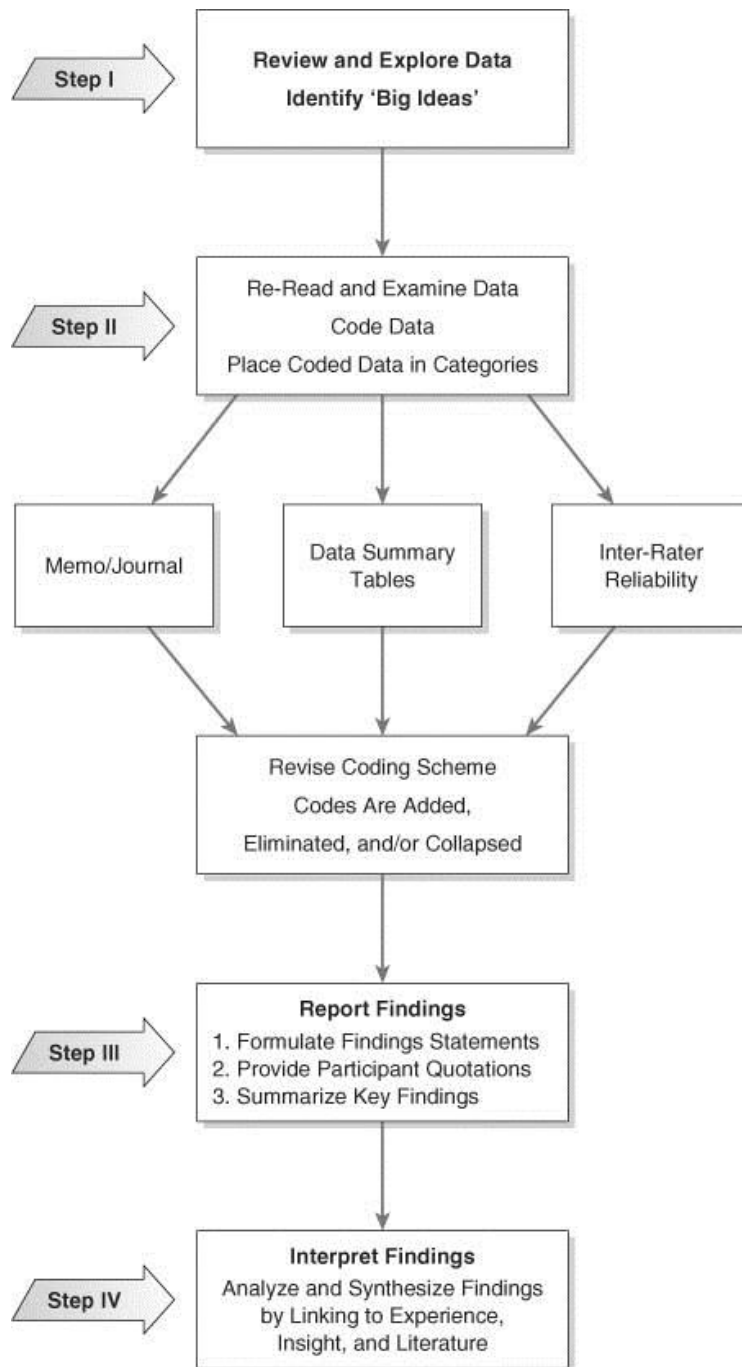


Figure 8. Steps of data analysis
Adapted from Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008, *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end* (p. 100), Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

In Phase 2 – Generating initial codes – I manually created an extensive list of codes (67 to be precise) (see Appendix 12), working systematically across all the interview and focus groups transcripts.

Keeping my focus on the participating teachers' views on visual literacy and their use of visual texts in their classroom practices, I assigned codes to sections that seemed to be 'particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied' (Bryman, 2014, p. 573). I highlighted sections in which the participating teachers' views reminded me of connections with relevant concepts explored in the literature review. Importantly, this initial coding was 'data driven' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). In other words, I did not try to fit the data into pre-existing coding categories or to match the codes to my preconceptions about what the analysis should include. Thus, I freely wrote general comments next to excerpts of data, to allow for codes to emerge and then use these for the next steps in the analysis. Figure 9 below illustrates this initial coding process.

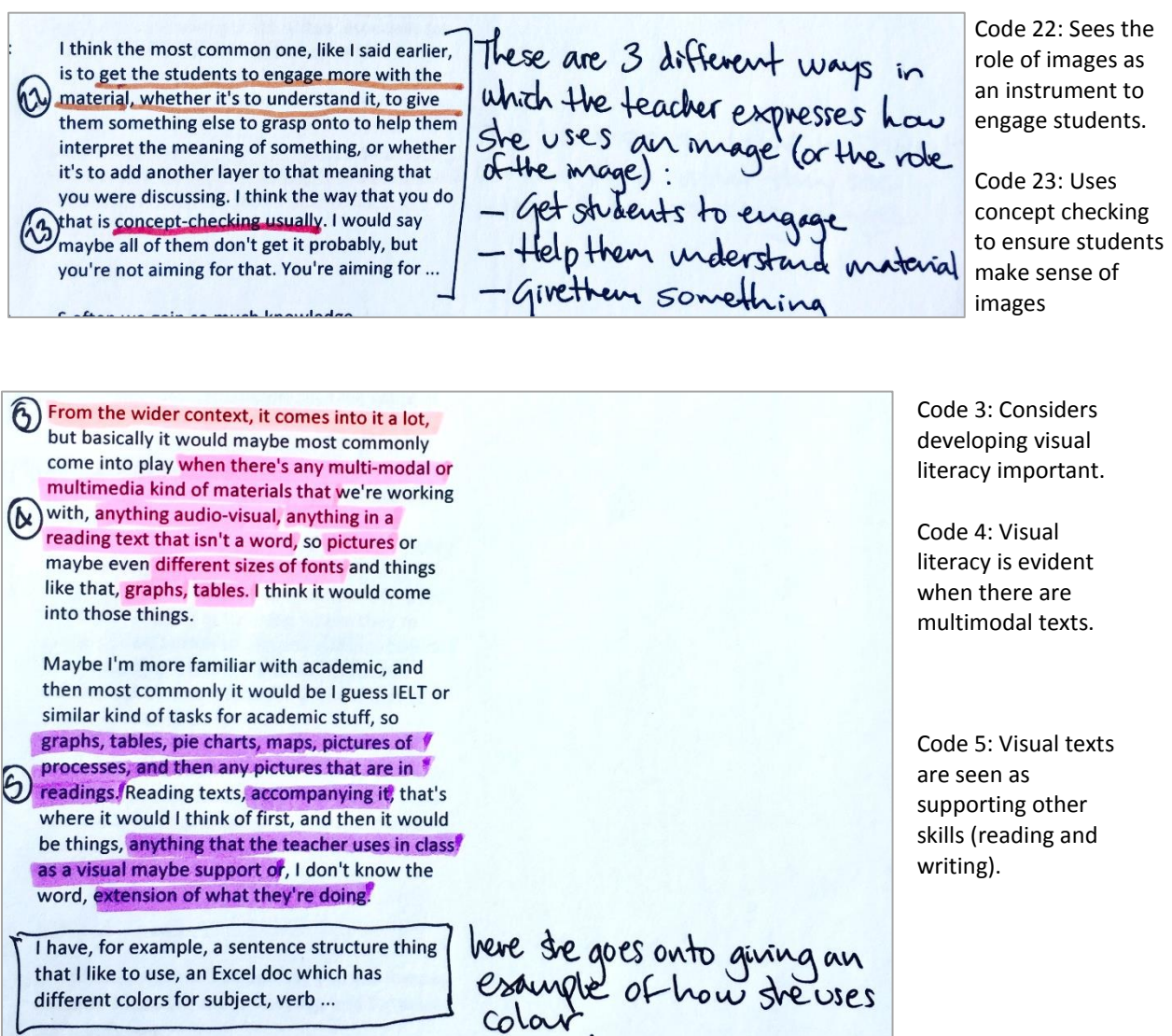


Figure 9. Examples of labels and general comments on excerpts of data.

After the first coding exercise, I progressed to Phase 3 of the thematic analysis – searching for themes. I clustered the coded data into meaningful categories (Tuckett, 2005) at a ‘semantic level’; that is, looking at the meaning of what the participants said (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83) in relation to their existing ideas about visual literacy. With this clustering process I was able to organise the 67 codes into 15 broad categories, which I used as summary markers (Namey et al., 2008) that could facilitate establishing themes for analysis. This reduction to the 15 categories was informed by the literature reviewed in relation to literacies as social practices and the many elements that influence teachers’ practices. Also, during this stage, I mapped each of the 67 individual codes within the 15 categories (See Appendix 13) and each category (see Table 6 below) to the three dimensions of literacy proposed by Green (1988, 2012b) – the operational, the cultural and the critical. I also scrutinised the coded data searching for instances in which I could link the participating teachers’ views to the affective dimension of viewing visual texts (Callow, 2005). My rationale for doing this was to find connections between the three dimensions and different affective reactions, experiences and perspectives that may influence the participating teachers’ constructs of visual literacy.

Table 6. Broad categories for potential themes

15 broad categories of codes	Dimension
1. Literacy as reading and writing	Operational
2. Literacy beyond reading and writing	Operational/Cultural/Critical
3. Visual literacy in relation to culture	Operational/Critical/Affective
4. Visual literacy as an essential skill	Operational/Critical
5. Visual literacy to support reading and writing	Operational
6. Visual literacy linked to technology	Operational/Cultural/Critical
7. Visual texts to better engage students	Critical/Affective
8. Visual text use considers gender, race and culture	Cultural/Critical/Affective
9. Visual text use based on appeal	Cultural/Critical/Affective
10. Visual text use based on elements of design	Operational/Cultural/Affective
11. Visual text use based on teacher’s objectives/purpose	Operational/Critical
12. Visual text use based on language ability	Operational/Critical
13. Visual literacy as understanding visual texts	Operational/Cultural/Critical
14. Communicating through visual texts	Operational/Cultural/Critical
15. Visual literacy linked to language ability	Operational

In Phase 4 – reviewing themes – I re-read all the transcripts to determine if the categories worked coherently in relation to the codes and the entire interview and focus group dataset. I then unpacked

each of the 15 categories to include more specific information about the participants' specific views, looking in detail into both common and unique perspectives (see Table 7 below). At this point, I re-ordered the sequence of the themes, with the aim of 'generating a thematic "map" of the analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87) that I could refer to easily in the report of the findings. Outlining the specifics of each theme allowed me to, in Phase 5 of the thematic analysis, condense them into 11 refined themes, which I later used to guide the major areas of discussion of the findings (see Table 8).

Table 7. Thematic map

1.	Traditional views on literacy as the abilities of reading, writing, listening and speaking were pervasive in half of the participating teachers
2.	Despite these traditional views of literacy, half of the teachers incorporated ideas around 'understanding' and 'meaning-making'
3.	Three participants connected literacy with the ability to use technologies proficiently
4.	Only one participant explicitly explained their view of literacy as multiple, and argued its importance within social practices in multiple contexts
5.	Three participants equated visual literacy with 'reading' or 'decoding' images, in a similar way as people read written texts
6.	Four participants defined visual literacy as decoding visual information and translating this into a verbal or written response
7.	Seven participants defined visual literacy as a person's ability to interpret the context around them. They emphasised the importance of visual literacy in understanding the culture in which someone learns English
8.	Only two participants considered visual literacy a reciprocal process in which people can interpret visual information and also respond (communicate) visually
9.	The majority of the participants considered visual literacy to be very important in the context of adult ELT
10.	The majority of the participants explained that their use of visual texts in the classroom helped them engage their students with written and spoken language and develop reading and writing skills
11.	All participants consider specific criteria in their visual text selection process. These criteria are in relation to the cultural diversity in their student cohorts; how relevant the visual texts are to the learners' needs and teachers' pedagogical purposes; and how clearly a particular visual text is to the students
12.	The majority of the participants shared that the programs they teach do not encourage the production of visual texts. Three participants explained that in classroom practices in which students produce visual texts, the purpose of this is to enhance reading, writing, listening and speaking skills
13.	Half of the teachers rely on observation of social cues in their students' reactions to check that they comprehend a visual text. The other half employs questioning and eliciting techniques
14.	The majority of the participants had not encountered visual literacy in their education or professional development. The use of visual texts in their training had been solely focused on supporting the development of traditional literacy skills
15.	Half of the participants linked visual literacy and the use of visual text in adult ELT to the availability of resources and technologies (e.g., computers, colour photocopying, data projectors, software).

Table 8. Refined themes for discussion or findings

1.	Divided views on literacy: traditional language skills vs. socially situated practices
2.	Visual literacy interpreted as reading visual texts
3.	Visual literacy interpreted as translating visual texts into written and/or spoken words
4.	Visual literacy is subject to and expressive of the context
5.	Visual literacy as a reciprocal communication process
6.	Teachers' criteria for visual text selection: cultural awareness and sensitivity, relevance and clarity
7.	Visual text production in adult ELT supports reading, writing, listening and speaking
8.	How teachers ascertain students' understanding of visual texts
9.	Visual literacy is not overtly addressed in preparation programs for adult English language teachers
10.	In teachers' education and professional development, visual texts support traditional skills
11.	Visual literacy and proficiency with digital technologies intersect in adult ELT

The final stage or Phase 6 in Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis consists of producing the report, which should lead to making an argument coherent with my theoretical position, in order to answer the research questions. To achieve this, I analysed the entire data set (interviews and focus groups) following the steps outlined. With coding of the data from all sources, shifting and evolving themes emerged, bringing together the participating teachers' individual perspectives regarding visual literacy, and discussion about whether they would use the visual texts they selected in the focus groups in their respective classrooms and why.

In reporting the data in chapters 5, 6 and 7, for ease of reference, when using direct quotes from the participants' answers, I have employed an *italics font style*. I have also used the pseudonym I assigned to each teacher (see Tables 1 and 2) and given them an interview number from 1 to 15, together with the date in which the data was collected (e.g., Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016). To report excerpts from the focus groups, I have labelled the two separate meetings as ELICOS and Gov-Fund. (Government funded). The former indicates the discussion that took place between four colleagues at one of the participating English language centres for overseas students (e.g., Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). The latter refers to the discussion – also between four colleagues – that occurred at one of the participating providers of Government-funded adult English language programs for migrants and refugees (e.g., Winnifred, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

4.8.2 Using visual texts in thematic analysis

Whilst photo-elicitation is commonly used as the foundation for analysis of visual texts (Britsch, 2012; Collier, 1986; Pink, 2013), in this study, I used the technique as a tool to draw out spoken (and then transcribed) data during the focus groups. The purpose of using visual texts in qualitative research is not necessarily to 'translate "visual evidence" into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) knowledge' (Pink, 2005, p. 96). Hence, visual analysis includes examination of the compositional, aesthetic, technical aspects of a visual text (Collier, 2001; Moss & Pini, 2016). However, my goal was not to conduct this type of visual analysis of the photographs and illustration that the participants selected. Instead, I analysed thematically what the participating teachers said *about* such visual texts (responding to VTS questions), allowing visual and written texts to contextualise and support each other (Pink, 2001).

As a result of the implementation of photo-elicitation via an adapted VTS procedure, the visual texts were much more than an additional mode of illustrating written/spoken texts. My reflection on how the participating teachers applied socially contextualised interpretations of visual texts, and discussed design conventions from what they had said about what they observed in the pictures, was a valuable resource in identifying and understanding the interconnections between their viewpoints at different times. This reflection also assisted me in the process of interpreting how the participants' views might manifest in their reported practices. In other words, observing the teachers' reactions toward certain visual texts and the comments they made about these, highlighted both agreement and discrepancies between the perspectives they shared during the interviews about visual literacy and their use of visual texts, and how they would actually incorporate specific visual texts in their adult ELT classrooms.

4.9 Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the design of the research process, explaining my rationale for situating the study within a qualitative framework. Through an examination of theories on research methodologies I showed that I identified with the worldview of an interpretivist researcher, and justified my decisions to adopt a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology. Furthermore, I provided a detailed account of my implementation of a case study methodology with semi-structured interviews and focus groups as methods of data collection, as well as photo-elicitation and VTS as strategies within these methods. Finally, I traced how I employed thematic analysis to evaluate and report the data presented in the following three chapters.

5 FINDINGS PART I: TEACHERS' CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF VISUAL LITERACY

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I report and analyse the data aiming to provide a comprehensive account of the 15 participants' perspectives on the research topic. Although I conceived the three chapters as parallel and interconnected, for readability I present them sequentially. In Chapter 5, I examine what the study participants construe as visual literacy in the context of adult ELT, making connections to Green's model of the three dimensions of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b) and Callow's (2005) affective dimension. In Chapter 6, I inspect the teachers' descriptions of their use of visual texts in their classroom practices. Finally, in Chapter 7, I explore what influences how these educators understand visual literacy and what shapes the ways in which they articulate their use of visual texts.

Importantly, I have not based my interpretations of the research participants' understandings of visual literacy on how well they were able to define it articulately in an interview, nor did I intend to identify perfect alignment between their empirical views and published visual literacy theory. My main focus was to investigate the teachers' perspectives on visual literacy and learn how these views permeated their accounts of their day-to-day classroom practice. Furthermore, adopting a reflexive stance (Berger, 2015; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizon, 2009; Stronach et al., 2007) helped me maintain a mindful and deliberate effort to be attuned to my own reactions to the participants' responses and to the way in which I constructed the narrative of the findings. The interview data showed differences in the ways that the 15 participants articulated their understanding of visual literacy. These one-on-one sessions provided opportunities for the teachers to demonstrate their tacit and explicit understandings of the subject, and to share examples related to both their personal lives and pedagogic practices. By way of 'thick description' (Denzin, 1989, p. 83), I documented a broad range of examples to paint a comprehensive picture of the participants' views.

5.1 Literacy as a starting point

This section draws on data analysed under the theme 'divided views on literacy: traditional language skills vs. socially situated practices'. English language teachers deal on a daily basis with curricula, assessment tasks and learning outcomes which – based on traditional conceptualisations of literacy – attempt to develop and measure an individual's accurate performance of a set of skills (Barton, 2007). Therefore, for these educators 'reading', 'writing', 'listening' and 'speaking' are commonly used terms to determine their learners' levels of literacy and the actions required to increase these skills. In light

of this, to invite the study participants into a dialogue which could gradually delve into a rich discussion about visual literacy, I first asked them *'In simple terms, what is your understanding of literacy?'*

5.1.1 Literacy as reading, writing, listening and speaking

Eight of the 15 participating teachers provided short answers that framed literacy in relation to reading and writing and/or listening and speaking. Below are examples of these responses:

Literacy usually means reading and writing, basically (Hermione, Interview 15 – 26.05.2016).

Initially, reading and writing come into my mind (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

I would say just being able – on a basic term – to read and write (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

I think the basis of literacy...I think we're aiming towards students being able to read and write . . . [It] has to be listening and speaking as well (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

You've got oracy as a literacy, speaking and listening, and then of course, you've got the obvious ones, which are reading and writing (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016).

The data above revealed connections between the teachers' understanding of literacy and what has been traditionally considered the core purpose of ELT, that is, the development of the four language macro-skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) (Hall, 2018; Harmer, 2008; Xiang & Borg, 2014). In essence, the participating teachers considered literacy in terms of how effectively learners manage the written and spoken English language system with its linguistic units or elements, such as sounds and letters, and the structures that make these into words and sentences that carry meaning (Goldstein, 2008). In relation to Green's (1988, 2012b) three-dimensional model of literacy, in these views, elements of the operational dimension stand out, as it involves competency in the language system – how a person uses language to operate effectively in a specific context.

5.1.2 Literacy as meaning making

Departing from the idea of literacy as only reading, writing, listening and speaking, seven teachers incorporated ideas around 'understanding' and 'meaning-making'. Below is a selection of these views:

I guess [literacy is] the ability to get meaning out of written text. The ability to read signs and symbols and process them as meaningful units . . . The way symbols are presented might have a cultural meaning for you (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

On one level, it's being able to interpret the written form and understanding how this relates to the spoken language. On another level, it's also being able to understand the messages that are contained (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Being able to understand procedures and the language that surrounds you. It comes from reading or from being able to write, read and listen (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

Not just read like you can read the words out loud on the page, but the words conjure up meaning for you and you can interpret them internally in a way that means something to you. There're not just hollow. Letters represent much more. (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

In these references to 'understanding' what words and sounds mean, the operational, cultural and critical dimensions (Green, 1988, 2012b) interplay. The teachers' responses illustrate their thinking about language learning as being more complex than acquiring operational knowledge of the linguistic units or elements used in a particular language. Their perspectives of literacy illustrate concern for the learner's need to go beyond simply being able to assemble letters and words, and to actually communicate by making connections to prior knowledge and experiences.

5.1.3 The relationship between literacy and technology

Three participants – Lourdes, Jordan and Jenny – expanded their definitions to include the relationship between literacy and various technologies (including digital) in and outside the classroom; that is, they alluded to how proficiency in different media affects learners' ability to engage with the language. For instance, Lourdes asserted:

With a lot of my students, if you looked at the literacy tasks they have at hand, [literacy] is about understanding the text message on their phone and what that appointment reminder is for, and having a look at the symbols (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

Lourdes' statement implies that even immigrants and refugees with very low English language literacy engage with mobile technology to construct meaning. This example brings up the element of power

within literacy, which understanding and effectively using mobile technologies afford language learners (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014). It also highlights that, in order to meaningfully utilise such technologies, the adult English language learners employing them also need to make connections to prior experiences – in this particular case, what an appointment is. Links to the operational, cultural and critical dimensions (Green, 1988, 2012b) emerge here.

Jenny and Jordan also identified literacy as linked to technology:

Literacy is, from a teacher's perspective, utilising every sense in a classroom, and it could be from the visual, the audio, even touch. Touch for me when it comes to the computer. For most students, it is hard to understand that they have to double click. They don't quite get it until I touch them and I help them move their finger...kinaesthetics (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

[Literacy is] the ability to maybe read and write using technologies, like a pen or a computer (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

Jenny's understanding of literacy suggested appreciation for the value of including different semiotic systems in ELT; yet, her main concern in this instance seemed to be on her students' proficient use of the technologies available in the classroom. Although this view foregrounds the operational dimension of literacy, it is also linked to aspects of the cultural dimension (Green, 1988, 2012b). The operational dimension here is linked to the mechanics of negotiating aspects of writing on a computer, such as clicking the correct button on the mouse, and the cultural dimension relates to whether Jenny's students can rely on prior experience in using digital technologies in other contexts. In Jordan's case, she also associated literacy to the use of technologies, but not only digital. Her view of literacy indicates that she placed high value on how students adequately handle different devices (e.g., pen, computer) as tools for communication in reading and writing. The operational dimension of literacy is reflected in the importance that she also accorded to the mechanical aspects of engaging with technology.

5.1.4 More complex views of literacy

Anastasia and Winnifred provided more complex definitions of literacy. They made reference to reading and writing skills and meaning making, but also addressed literacy's integral role in a person's place within society. Anastasia said:

I think, in a very broad sense literacy is being able to function to your full capacity as a citizen in the society. It is a multifaceted concept . . . Academic, social, cultural, financial, visual . . . Computer literacy, critical literacy is a huge one (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

Anastasia's explanation embraces the idea of multiple 'literacies', which involve social practices that are important for people to be able to operate not only in a language classroom but in multiple contexts in their personal and professional lives (Gee, 1990; Green, 2012b; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Street, 2009a). This perspective is commonly acknowledged in conceptualisations of literacy and contexts beyond ELT (The New London Group, 2000). It is worth noting that at the interview, Anastasia mentioned that her answer was influenced by her specific student cohorts. Unlike the rest of the participants in the study – who teach overseas students learning academic English, migrants or refugees – Anastasia instructs foreign qualified nurses who arrive in Australia with an intermediate to advanced command of English. To gain registration to practise onshore, they require specialised training in 'English for health professionals'. Thus, it could be argued that the complexity of Anastasia's students' needs and language requirements in relation to their occupation contributed to the complexity of her definition of literacy.

Winnifred's definition of literacy also incorporated her understanding of the concept beyond the confines of the English language classroom:

The ability to look at information. Reading, then the written language and being able to extract information out of that written knowledge for either your own benefit or for the benefit of your work or your studies, or for your personal life . . . depending on what our past experiences are and what knowledge or devices we have within us to interpret that (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

Winnifred's view is in line with socio-cultural perspectives of literacy, in which literacy events take place in diverse contexts (Heath, 1983; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). She considers not only the necessity of being able to read and write, but also the importance of making connections to prior experiences in order to apply the knowledge acquired through this process in meaningful ways. Green's (1988, 2012b) three-dimensional view is illustrated in Winnifred's understanding of literacy.

5.2 Different teacher views on visual literacy

Moving on from 'literacy' as the starting point, this section elucidates how participants defined visual literacy and explained their understanding of links between this and the more traditionally observed language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Green (2012b) argues that conceptualisations of literacy should holistically incorporate the operational, cultural and critical dimensions. However, the examples below illustrate that the participating teachers' views focused on operational processes that seemed informed by entrenched understandings of print-based literacy. In other words, they applied concepts they had traditionally worked with – such as literacy equating the ability to read and produce written texts – to explain their understanding of visual literacy skills (e.g., encoding and decoding images). Importantly, using the 3D model's non-linear and non-hierarchical approach (Green, 1988, 2012b), I also identified when in their definitions the participants incorporated meaning-making and construction and application of knowledge – processes which lie in the cultural and critical dimensions, respectively. Furthermore, teachers' considerations of the personal emotional reactions people may have upon engaging with a visual text brought up links to affect in visual literacy (Callow, 2005; Cole, 2012; Deleuze, 1995).

5.2.1 Reading and decoding images (visual texts)

This section draws on data categorised under the theme 'visual literacy interpreted as reading visual texts'. Two participants used the notions of 'reading' and 'decoding' to explain visual literacy:

[Visual literacy] is the ability to 'read an image' or the ability to make meaning out of an image (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

[Visual literacy] is the ability to read and interpret anything that you can see that's not words, so maybe colours, shapes, more commonly pictures, graphs, diagrams, and to make meaning from those (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

Mercedes and Georgie used the notion of 'reading images' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) to explain a person's ability to examine the formal elements and structures of design present in visual representations in order to make meaning. Whilst these views highlight connections to the operational dimension of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b), which encompasses the technical aspects of using a language system and knowledge of how it functions (e.g., visual language), how meaning making happens – linked to the cultural dimension – is not overtly addressed. Anastasia's response

was similar in essence, but she utilised the word ‘decoding’, seemingly as if it were synonymous with reading:

Visual literacy is the ability to decode pictographs, signs, images, anything that you use your eyes with that is in non-written form . . . Decoding anything that isn’t script (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

Like Mercedes and Georgie, Anastasia clarified that in the context of visual literacy, ‘visual things’ (e.g., pictographs and signs) are the texts than can indeed be ‘read’ or decoded. These three teachers’ definitions illustrate the idea that the viewer needs to interpret a language system made of dots, lines, strokes, pixels and colours, among other design elements, to make sense of the objects depicted in a painting, photograph, drawing, etc. and their relationship with each other. In written language, this is equivalent to the reader decoding letters, syllables, words, phrases, sentences and ideas, by making connections to previous knowledge and building on existing schema (Messaris, 1994).

5.2.2 Translating images (visual texts) into words

The data reported in this section were clustered under the theme ‘visual literacy interpreted as translating visual texts into written and/or spoken words’. Four participants – Jenny, Kylie, Jordan and Jacob – also associated visual literacy with ‘decoding images’, but in addition, they addressed how the viewer can ‘encode’ a message (i.e. create a response) with the information they access through these visual texts:

When I say visual literacy, I’m talking about viewing an actual picture, not necessarily viewing a word...Even in viewing the word, you can hold up a word but if they [students] don’t know the meaning of the word or if they can’t even articulate the word, it has nothing, it doesn’t mean, it doesn’t do anything . . . [Visual literacy] is to be able to articulate what’s being seen before you, based on the image. It’s really understanding what’s seen and being able to articulate what it is by describing it (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

[Visual literacy is] the ability to translate pictures and graphs into words . . . probably understanding them and being able to turn that into some sort of oral presentation (Kylie, Interview 4 – 6.04.2016).

Visual literacy would be one's capacity to look and observe and interpret from what they've seen, [making] critiques and evaluations and judgements and interpretations about representations' (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

[Visual literacy is] the ability to decode information read, or seen, or viewed . . . and to be able to understand and to produce, and to be able to communicate in terms of text (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

The responses around decoding visual texts and 'translating' or 'articulating' them into words show connections that the participants made between the act of engaging with information presented visually and expressing understanding of this in written or spoken language. In other words, these views foreground links between visual literacy and written and spoken text literacies. At the same time, these perspectives relate to the notions of representation and communication (Hall, 1996; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), as they bring up the ideas of how people form a narrative in their minds about what they understand from meaningfully engaging with a text, and how they then communicate a response.

These teachers' perspectives also incorporate the concept of multimodality in education (Cloonan, 2010; Kress, 2010; Mills, 2010; The New London Group, 1996), which incorporates operational, cultural and critical elements of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b). For instance, in these perceptions, the operational dimension deals with the teachers' concern for their learners' ability to view a visual text and produce words as a response to the visual stimuli. To participate in this process of interpretation and 'translation' from visual to written or spoken language, critical construction of knowledge is necessary. In addition, this would not be possible without an individual drawing from elements of the cultural dimension' that is, making meaning from visual texts as a result of establishing connections between prior experience and the culture in which the visuals are observed.

5.2.3 Understanding the context

'Visual literacy is subject to and expressive of the context' – the third of four themes regarding data about the participating English language teachers' perspectives on visual literacy – informs this section. Visual texts and artefacts are imbued with cultural and social meanings. Thus, visual literacy can act as a way of gaining access to some of these meanings, and support learners' growing understanding of the context in which they communicate. Giving more explicit emphasis to the role visual literacy plays in understanding the context in which language learning takes place, seven

participants framed their definitions around how the viewer interprets their surroundings, that is, in relation to how visual artefacts can help construct knowledge about the context:

[Visual literacy is] how you understand the world, and how you receive messages and communicate as well, so how you perceive the world around you (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

[Visual literacy is] another form of literacy, of learning information . . . of understanding the world and our surroundings through pictures, through moving pictures, through images of what we see (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

Visual literacy could be interpreting the visual environment, it could be that broad . . . I guess with my students, interpreting signs, symbols, images, pictograms, emojis, whatever, so that they can get meaning as relevant to their daily lives (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

Allegra, Winnifred and Lourdes indicated a strong focus on the role that visual literacy plays in learning from and about the context in which visual texts are observed, suggesting that visual literacy informs communication in everyday life. Meaningful interpretation of visual texts in the surroundings involves aspects of the operational and cultural dimensions of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b), as this process requires the viewer not only to know design elements contained in the signs and symbols they see, but also to be able to link these to prior experiences and existing knowledge.

Kylie, Anastasia, Julian and Jordan also indicated the ways culture and the social context of visual texts/artefacts inhabit and shape their meaning, though they also emphasised the importance of understanding sociocultural differences in visual literacy. They suggested that visual literacy and making [the intended] sense of visual texts are bound to the world in which people and visual texts exist and operate. Kylie referred to visual literacy in language teaching as ‘*an introduction into the culture*’ and argued that ‘*even basic pictures can be different from country to country . . . People don't always understand the meaning of a picture . . . it [visual literacy] definitely helps people adapt to the local lifestyle, culture, even signs on the roads*’ (Kylie, Interview 4 – 6.04.2016). Along similar lines, Anastasia stated that visual literacy is ‘*very much culturally influenced*’ (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016). She questioned textbooks which assumed pictures to have ‘*universal meaning*’, and provided the following observation based on her experience outside the classroom:

If you want to indicate a restaurant in a western country, you might have a knife and fork, on a plate, whereas, when I was working in China, it was two chopsticks and a bowl...In India for example, male and female toilets...the male has a turban and a female has a sari (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

Anastasia's view of visual literacy as attached to the culture in which a visual text exists was supported by her knowledge of contrasting conventions used in signs in different parts of the world. She added that she considered it *'very interesting seeing what the different responses to visual materials are according to their [her students] cultural background, even their gender'* (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016). In her comment about signs for restaurants in different contexts, the cultural dimension involves a person's ability to decode the intended meaning of a visual text, and the critical dimension encompasses what the viewer chooses to do with this information in order to participate in social practices in meaningful ways. This perspective aligns with the notion that socio-culturally contextualised artefacts – such as a sign indicating 'restaurant' – are essential in making sense of everyday events (Barker, 2012; Hall, 2013) in a visual culture (Mirzoeff, 1999). In Anastasia's example, someone would need to possess knowledge of the traditional way in which food is consumed in China in order to interpret a sign with chopsticks and decode the idea of 'restaurant'.

Also using examples from their own experiences, Julian and Jordan indicated that visual literacy can facilitate understanding a person's world. By way of illustration, Julian shared the following scenario from his vast experience as an adult English language teacher:

I think you've got to see visual literacy as being culturally bound. I don't think you can talk about it as a neutral objective skill. I think you've got to see it embedded in a particular context . . . Sometimes, learners will see a picture or a diagram and they will interpret it completely differently to the way that I expected them to . . . Once, I was teaching a group of Chinese students in China, and I had a picture. It was a picture of a couple. They were having breakfast. It wasn't risqué or anything, but it was obvious that they were a couple and they were having breakfast. They were fully clothed...sort of, they were in their pyjamas. We used this picture. I couldn't understand the reaction of the students at all. I asked one of the teachers that I was friendly with what was going on here. She said, 'They've got bare feet at the dining table'. I asked 'Why is that important?' She said, 'It means they've probably been making love' (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Julian explained that this eye-opening experience is one of many which have shaped his opinion that people do not see anything neutrally. Rather he believes that *'you bring meaning to the thing that you're looking at, but not the other way around . . . you bring expectations, you interpret things based on your experience, but also based on your culture'* (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016). In his example, it became evident that there was a disparity between his understanding of certain cultural practices and the cultural understandings his students brought to the classroom. In other words, how he and his students built internal narratives upon viewing a visual text (Hall, 1996) were mismatched. Cultural Studies scholars (Barker, 2012; Du Gay et al., 1997; Hall, 1980; Hall, 1990; Lewis, 2011) emphasise that common gestures (e.g., greetings, eye contact), signs (e.g., arrows pointing to restrooms and lifts) and symbols (e.g., a white dove for peace) are not universally understood, as these are influenced by personal, socio-cultural and religious beliefs.

Jordan's recollection of experiences as a parent and from her upbringing in other countries reinforces Julian's conclusions:

Just anecdotally from my own experience, I know from having lived in quite a few different countries and having children . . . I know that what children are taught to notice and look at is very different cross-culturally. As it is from family to family. My parents were schoolteachers, so they raised us to look at these ants, or look at the moon, whereas other people might raise their children to look at other things. I think visual literacy is going to be something that you're going to be trained in by virtue of living in a particular cultural environment or national environment (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

Similar to Julian's perspective, Jordan's views on visual literacy involved both learning how to use visual language to become 'an effective, functioning participant in the culture' (Green, 2012b, p. 5) and employing culture as a resource for meaning. These two teachers made the important point that they had learnt to make interpretations influenced by specific contexts, and did not assume that exposure to visual information in a particular culture necessarily leads to visual literacy. For them, simply looking at visual texts does not guarantee that the viewer will naturally interpret it with the meaning intended by the text's maker (Brumberger, 2011; Felten, 2008).

Hermione's explanation was also based on her reflection on how a viewer interprets their particular surroundings:

It [visual literacy] is kind of interpreting . . . I mean it would be looking at the pictures around the wall in this café and saying ‘Why have they chosen those? What are they trying to tell me by their choice of pictures?’ And then, ‘What are they trying to tell me about how they've organised them? What kind of experience are they trying to get me to have and what are they trying to tell me about the type of place it is?’ For me, that's part of visual literacy and there's no words in that at all (Hermione, Interview 15 – 26.05.2016).

Hermione saw visual literacy as crucial in understanding a specific context and operating effectively within it. In her example, Green's (1988, 2012b) three dimensions play part in visual literacy: the operational – the ability required to use visual language competently; the cultural – the meaning a particular picture possesses for a viewer, in relation to their prior knowledge and experiences; and the critical – how both understanding and feelings may empower them to better function in that context and gain control of their options for communicating in it.

Finally, Mercedes' understanding of visual literacy incorporates the additional element of affective responses:

How you read and how you view an image is really, really, really, really dependent on the context that you see it in. The way symbols are presented might have a cultural meaning for you, but also really subconscious things like the way colours are used. Colours evoke emotions and the way white is used to make things look scarier or less threatening (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

In Mercedes' statement, affect (Cole, 2012; Scribner & Cole, 1981) plays an important role in how people engage with and react to a visual text in a particular context. In this sense, a visually literate person is able to grasp the affective impact or 'feel' of a visual text (Callow, 2007). Mercedes made links between symbols, meaning and emotions, suggesting that visual texts have the potential to trigger different feelings in the viewer. Importantly, this view also suggests that the producer of a visual text could have the capacity to manipulate what sort of affective reactions it causes. This idea is supported by the understanding of colours and design techniques having different connotations for people from other sociocultural backgrounds. Cyr, Head, and Larios (2010) suggest that colour elements such as hue, brightness and saturation, can potentially affect the viewer's perceptions and physical and emotional reactions, and guide their behaviour.

5.2.4 A reciprocal communication process

This section discusses data themed under ‘visual literacy as a reciprocal communication process’. In contrast with the notion of written or spoken responses to a visual message, Muriel and Jacob saw visual literacy also as the ability to construct responses, not only through words but in a ‘visual language’:

For me, that [viewing] would be about looking at more visual...at images, and communicating through images as well (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016).

We need visual literacy to be able to view how the person is, how their body language is changing, how they are producing English, and for that to be able to have that two-way conversation (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

These teachers’ views place the language learner as agent in a two-way process of meaning making and transforming information. This notion integrates the operational, cultural and critical dimensions (Green, 1988, 2012b). A viewer – the language learner – needs to have a command of visual language and knowledge of what the symbols in this language mean in particular contexts in order to decode a visual text and then construct a visual response (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Visual literacy here would involve students’ competency to look at a visual text and respond with another one, rather than with words.

By way of illustrating visual literacy as a reciprocal process, students could be tasked with analysing a line graph, and instead of writing or saying something about it, be required to express what they understood with another form of visual representation. To do this, they would need to observe the graph’s components – vectors, points, the line that joins them, as well as the direction in which these ascend or descend – and interpret what these lines mean in relation to the topic being discussed. Then – and this is the key difference here in relation to one-directional notions of visual literacy – the viewer would not produce an oral or written response, rather, they would employ another visual method to express their understanding, such as drawing a picture of the differences they understood from one point to another in the graph. This may seem an unrealistic proposition in adult ELT. However, in Section 6.5.3, three ELICOS teachers – Jacob, Lola and Mercedes – provide an example of a classroom exercise which affords their students the opportunity to represent their understanding via a visual response.

When the study participants engaged in discussing how important they thought visual literacy was in adult ELT, they expanded views such as *'the ability to read and interpret anything that you can see that's not words'* (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016) to include in their conceptualisations the idea of using visual texts in their pedagogies. As they talked about the reasons why they thought using visual texts was vital, the teachers broadened their definitions of visual literacy as comprising two aspects: First, a set of competencies their students can use to support their written/spoken language learning, and second, a way to improve their own teaching. This idea is supported by data in which even those participants who did not explicitly attribute great importance to visual literacy, reported that they *do* use visual texts in their classrooms, considering them useful to assist English language learning.

5.3 Summary

In Chapter 5, the first of three findings chapters, I have examined how the participating teachers interpreted visual literacy in the context of adult ELT, drawing on analysis of the data grouped under the following themes:

1. Divided views on literacy: traditional language skills vs. socially situated practices
2. Visual literacy interpreted as reading visual texts
3. Visual literacy interpreted as translating visual texts into written and/or spoken words
4. Visual literacy is subject to and expressive of the context
5. Visual literacy as a reciprocal communication process.

The chapter begins with contextualising the participating teachers' perspectives within the broad scope of literacy. The data revealed views on the concept of literacy as deeply rooted in traditional understandings of language teaching and learning, which place great importance on the development of a traditional set of cognitive skills, namely reading, writing, listening and speaking (Harmer, 2008; Xiang & Borg, 2014). In relation to the literacy lens employed in the study – the 3D model (Green, 1988, 2012b) the teachers' views are associated to a large extent with the operational aspects of developing competency in a language in order to operate effectively in a particular context. The data also illustrated teachers' understanding of connections between literacy, meaning making and the effective use of modern digital technologies, revealing more cultural and critical elements involved in using literacy so that learners can actively engage in ways they choose in diverse social contexts. Furthermore, connections to the affective dimension (Callow, 2005) were identified in the teachers' views on the reactions that design elements of a particular visual text can evoke in the viewer.

The data revealed that in the participants' views of visual literacy, connections can be made to the operational, cultural and critical dimensions. The operational dimension was identified in the teachers' mention of viewing abilities and how these also support traditional language and literacy skills. Within the cultural dimension, teachers linked visual literacy to interpreting visual texts based on the context in which teaching and learning takes place. Finally, under the critical dimension, teachers seemed very aware of their students' existing cultural knowledge and their need to understand new cultural contexts in order to effectively use visual texts. The importance of this awareness for effectively and judiciously participating in new social practices was also noted.

The data also suggested that, despite describing visual texts as sources of information and ways of communicating without words, the development of learners' reading and writing skills, their coherent and meaningful interpretation of written texts and fluency in the spoken word seemed to be at the forefront of the participants' objectives when using visual texts. Thus, the teachers described visual literacy in terms of the actions of 'decoding' and 'reading images'. The teachers also described meaning making from visual texts as culturally contextualised and as a way for people to see and understand the world. The second and third data analysis chapters that follow unpack the teachers' descriptions of their classroom practices incorporating visual texts, the experiences they saw shaping their perspectives on visual literacy, and how they viewed the role of visual texts in their pedagogies.

6 FINDINGS PART II: SELF-REPORTED CLASSROOM PRACTICES

While Chapter 5 explored what the participating teachers thought about visual literacy and related concepts, Chapter 6 is about what they report as their practices in relation to their use of visual texts in their classrooms. There are six distinct sections in the chapter. The first section situates visual literacy as high on the agenda of the participating adult English language teachers, despite varying levels of clarity on the concept. The following section explores the study participants' views on the role that visual texts play in the adult ELT context and the different purposes for which they reported employing these. The third section investigates the criteria the participants considered when they selected a specific visual text to use in their adult English language lessons.

I incorporated the focus group data analysis into the fourth section, in order to illustrate the participants' contrasting personal visual representations of a particular concept. The two one-hour focus groups yielded rich insight into how these educators interpreted different theme-specific visual texts, and the rationale behind their decision to avoid employing some of these visual texts in their English language lessons. The fifth section highlights the teachers' views on the limited opportunities that their adult English language learners encounter to express understanding through visual texts in ELICOS and Government-funded programs for migrants and refugees. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the teachers' impressions of how their learners responded to their selection of visual texts in the adult English language classroom.

6.1 Rating visual literacy in ELT

To introduce this section of the data, I compiled the participants' first thoughts upon answering the question '*What importance would you place on visual literacy in the context of adult ELT?*' (See Table 9 below) Employing a variety of synonyms, 11 out of the 15 teachers explicitly indicated that for them visual literacy was of high importance. Of the remaining four participants, one considered visual literacy of less importance, one admitted not having focused on it in the past, and two did not answer the question explicitly. Furthermore, Julian and Hermione emphasised the need for visual literacy to understand the culture in which visual texts exist, rather than ranking it in terms of significance. I have arranged the expressions in a descending order of significance, aiming to illustrate the range of responses in a snapshot via the participants' own lexicon.

The data suggested that even those participants who did not explicitly give visual literacy a high priority, believed it *did* play a role in their teaching practices. Furthermore, while the participants'

initial definitions of visual literacy emphasised the consumption aspect of visual texts (e.g., how their students would read/decode/observe, view visual texts), when elaborating on their answers to ‘*what importance would you place on visual literacy in the context of adult ELT?*’ they positioned themselves as the agent who viewed, selected and utilised visual texts. This chapter elucidates the connections between the participating teachers’ understanding of visual literacy and their reported use of visual texts in their classroom practices.

Table 9. Participating teachers’ views on the importance of visual literacy in adult ELT

Teacher	What importance would you place to visual literacy in the context of adult ELT?
1. Anastasia	<i>Essential. Absolutely essential</i> (Interview 11 – 10.05.2016)
2. Allegra	<i>Very, extremely important</i> (Interview 1 – 30.03.2016)
3. Lili	<i>I think it's highly important. Incredibly important</i> (Interview 7 – 14.04.2016)
4. Georgie	<i>Huge importance</i> (Interview 2 – 6.04.2016)
5. Jacob	<i>It's massive, it's massive</i> (Interview 3 – 6.04.2016)
6. Jordan	<i>I would place great importance on it</i> (Interview 8 – 26.04.2016)
7. Jenny	<i>Very high</i> (Interview 12 – 16.05.2016)
8. Lourdes	<i>I think it's really important</i> (Interview 10 – 4.05.2016)
9. Mercedes	<i>I think that it's really important</i> (Interview 5 – 11.04.2016)
10. Muriel	<i>I'd probably put it pretty high up there</i> (Interview 14 – 26.05.2016)
11. Lola	<i>A lot of times when something is explained to me I don't get it, but when I visualise it in whatever way...[I do]</i> (Interview 9 – 27.04.2016)
12. Kylie	<i>I wouldn't say it's number one, but it's definitely important</i> (Interview 4 – 6.04.2016)
13. Winnifred	<i>I've never put that much of a focus on it</i> (Interview 6 – 12.04.2016)
14. Julian	<i>It's culturally specific</i> (Interview 13 – 25.05.2016)
15. Hermione	<i>It's very culture specific</i> (Interview 15 – 26.05.2016)

6.2 The supporting role of visual texts in adult ELT

Adult English language teachers are often concerned about ‘what “should be done”, “should be the case”, and “is preferable” in their practice (Basturkmen et al., 2004, p. 244). These ideas are usually related to traditional literacy skills, the acts of teaching and learning, the curriculum guiding teaching, and ELT as a profession (Borg, 2001; Breen et al., 1998; Harmer, 2013; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). This concern for what teachers ‘ought to do’ was represented in how the participants articulated their views on visual texts as having the role in their pedagogies of being introductory to and supporting of traditional literacy skills, and in their explanations about what kinds of visual texts they employed, for what reason, when and how.

For Allegra, Lourdes and Lili – visual texts were essential to engage their low English language level students in written and spoken language. They stated:

If they [the students] are not able to write, [or] read, then, visuals become one of our main resources in terms of communicating with them, because their language is quite limited, then we have to use visuals to make ourselves understood and to facilitate learning. So visuals are a big part of our teaching (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

I've taught a lot of preliminary courses . . . Very low level. One of the things that we often do there is start with signs – as in the symbols of the signs – not the words. We start, female toilet, male toilet, all of those things (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

In any situation where I'm teaching any skill in low levels, I use a lot of visuals and I use a lot of pictures. I draw . . . Anything to give another anchor to help get the message across . . . I think that I wouldn't be able to teach if there, if there wasn't an opportunity to look at something . . . It can be a conversation starter. It can reinforce something you've learned (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

Using qualifiers such as 'low literacy', 'preliminary' and 'low level' to refer their students' needs in managing English, Allegra, Lourdes and Lili reported employing visual texts as a way to communicate content. The term 'low literacy learners' has been used broadly since the 1980s to refer to low-educated second language and literacy acquisition (LESLLA) learners (Choi & Ziegler, 2015). In this case, the participants took into account their awareness of their students' circumstances, including, for instance, minimal knowledge of the target language, low literacy in their home language(s) and the short time these individuals had spent learning English. The teachers' purpose was to enhance basic understanding. As a result, Allegra, Lourdes and Lili were categorical about the need for visual texts in their classrooms. In fact, they saw visual texts as their main resource for getting a message across.

Winnifred, Georgie and Jenny also saw the use of visual texts as conducive to their students accessing language in a 'non-threatening way', and as a spark to activate learning. Here, visual texts were seen as a bridge to written language:

In our ELT context I think maybe images could be used as an introductory medium before going into learning how to read and how to write. It could be something that's easier to digest. A taste sort of thing. Let them try a little bit. Do it through viewing because that's easier on the brain, it's easy on the eyes, easy on the person (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

Pictures may be the trigger for students to activate their prior knowledge and maybe the active vocabulary they have about a certain topic, before they start dealing with it. Especially in a context of maybe academic reading or listening where they're going to look at maybe the visual things before they actually even encounter the content (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

They [students] can look at a picture and it's not as intimidating as it would be to look at a sea of words – a paragraph (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

These views on visual texts as an 'introductory medium', 'easier to digest', and 'not as intimidating', suggest that for these educators, using visuals was considered likely to be more attractive to the learner than verbal language. Notably, Georgie distinguished between visual texts as the 'trigger' and the actual 'content' in a lesson. This use of visual texts as 'prompts', 'starters' or 'triggers' contrasts with de Silva Joyce's (2014) argument that teaching strategies to interpret visual and multimodal texts (i.e., teaching visual literacy) ought to be an integral part of classroom practice in adult ELT. Lili provided an example of a routine practice in her teaching – prefacing written texts with visual texts:

If I was introducing a text...So, today I just ran a session with our staff, with our teachers, just about using visuals in the classroom, visual prompts. If I was introducing any text, any written text, the students wouldn't see the text until after we looked at the pictures and they would have to predict the text from the pictures (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

Lili indicated that visual texts are useful to elicit ideas from her students about what the written texts in a particular lesson will be about. Again, this practice places visual texts as prompts used as the introductory medium to written texts. Similarly, Jenny reported how using photographs from a magazine helped her facilitate a basic discussion among her students:

Today, I used mostly images from a magazine about lanterns in China and the Chinese students were really animated when they saw that and the other students were actually interested in

knowing about that part of their culture and why it was important to them. Then they really struggled to articulate in English what it actually meant, but then we could all help. Well, does it mean good luck? It meant we could have a discussion but everybody could participate in a very basic way (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

Here, Jenny relied on her students' cultural background to recognise familiar visual texts. She elicited words from her class, to then, with some coaching, help them structure a basic conversation. Activities of this kind demonstrate that the participating adult English language teachers used visual texts mainly as prompts, which is key to practices that support the development of traditional literacy skills, rather than as a resource to develop visual literacy.

Other teachers described a different approach to using visual texts, but still assigned to these the role of supporting written or spoken language. Jenny, Jordan and Lola provided examples of how they incorporated visual texts into their pedagogies as a 'warm up' exercise, in order to aid the development of reading, writing and speaking, rather than as a communicative device to be used in lieu of proficiency in these competencies:

If they can look at an image, they can come up with some language because the image, may be from previous experience . . . Today was a perfect example; I used images all day today and the students were able to write a paragraph from what they saw. Admittedly I modelled it on the board but we made that paragraph together and we had an image on the board and I asked them to tell me what they saw and what they thought it was and then we made a story (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

Pictures reinforce any verbal, written or spoken English that you're teaching (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

[Visual texts] could maybe help or add to a person's ability to understand or read or write something, speeding up the process of learning a language in general (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

Here, the idea of using visual texts as a stimulus for the development of reading, writing and speaking suggests that teachers may miss the opportunity to help their students' develop important social and

cultural competencies, such as by engaging with and critically analysing visual texts, as well as understanding their social impact (Barnes, 2011).

6.3 Educators' criteria for their use of visual texts in adult ELT

In this section, I examine the data in which the participating adult English language teachers justified their selection and use of visual texts in their classroom practices. This section draws on data categorised under the theme 'teachers' criteria for visual text selection: cultural awareness and sensitivity, relevance and clarity'.

6.3.1 Cultural awareness and sensitivity

Working in environments populated by immigrants and international students from around the globe, being aware of socio-cultural sensitivities was at the forefront of the teachers' visual text selection process. For instance, Kylie, Mercedes and Lourdes placed appropriateness at the top of their criteria:

We don't allow any kind of image that can stir some uncomfortable feelings, in terms of religion, in terms of culture background . . . They [the students] are quite sensitive about a lot of things. Sometimes, I could use lots and lots of resources from the internet, but I know that there is always a chance some picture, some background, will bring about a discussion, which I don't want. It's quite difficult (Kylie, Interview 4 – 6.04.2016).

I always make sure, because I've got Muslim students, I try to avoid having women in bikinis, or people drinking alcohol, or pigs. That's something that we get reminded about in our centre (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

Because I have in one of my groups a lot of very – I would say – fairly devout Muslim women, if I'm going to show a picture of a woman doing something, she's certainly not going to be in a bikini. I try and find things that are just more subtly acceptable (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

Mindful of the diversity in their student cohorts, Kylie, Mercedes and Lourdes showed concern for potential negative reactions in their students. Their selection method can be linked to the affective dimension of engaging with visual texts (Callow, 2005). By censoring visual texts that may offend viewers from particular cultural backgrounds and with diverse religious beliefs, these educators aimed

to provide in their classrooms an appropriate affective environment for language learning (Cole & Yang, 2008). In essence, prior to displaying a particular picture, video or website in their classrooms, such teachers considered their students' backgrounds to create and maintain feelings of safety, belonging and acceptance (Glasser, 1998). The teachers' consideration of the multiple different meanings a person can make from the same visual text relates to the concept of representation (Hall, 1996, 2013; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012); that is, the internal narratives people construct upon receiving information.

Adding to the idea of visual text appropriateness, Jacob and Allegra said that they worry about political upheaval in some of their students' countries of origin, particularly in the case of those individuals who are in Australia on a refugee status (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016) (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016):

That would be my first question: is the image appropriate? I'd have to think of cultural diversity. And I would have to think about political sensitivity, and I would consider as to whether or not the image could in any way be misunderstood or misconstrued (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

I would suggest that we choose images that don't make them [the students] feel uncomfortable, first of all, or don't affect them in an emotional way, because some of them come from difficult situations in their home countries (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

Jacob's and Allegra's statements suggest that their awareness of adverse political climate in some of their learners' home countries prompted them to see some visual texts as offensive or confronting, as these may trigger negative feelings. This concern for the reactions a visual text might arouse in a student highlights the affective dimension (Callow, 2005), which encompasses feelings and states of mind. Also taking into account the different personal circumstances that may have brought their students to their classrooms, Julian – an educator who has taught both international students and migrants – stated:

I think the first thing I would start with is, is it culturally inappropriate . . . Some images, I think, would be too confronting. You might find this is a difference between people who teach ELICOS and people who teach migrants. It's not an unusual situation for some of your class to be refugees, to have spent five years in a Kenyan camp before they managed to get a visa. They

may have had no schooling, they may have no country. You have to be very careful to choose things. You don't want to spark traumatic memories by using inappropriate imagery. I think also, you've got to be careful about other things as well. A very common resource is images of festivals. Festival is very loaded, you have to be very careful, I think, about which ones you use (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Here, Julian alluded to the financial differences that often exist between students enrolled in privately-funded ELICOS courses and Government-funded programs for adult migrants and refugees. He emphasised that, since it cannot be assumed that all international students originate from a more privileged background than immigrants (or vice-versa), he is cautious in his visual text selection, and employs his experience teaching in both adult ELT sectors (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016). Julian's view foregrounds the cultural and critical dimensions of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b), which, for the teacher, involve making connections to prior experiences in order to inform practices, and critically evaluating the uses and effects a particular visual text may have.

Georgie, Jenny and Lourdes selected visual texts on the basis of gender inclusion and ethnic representativeness in their visual text selection. Below are the views they shared about what they consider when choosing a visual text to use in class:

What I mostly think about is if there's a mix of different races, different backgrounds, different ages. I always consider that, if there's any people in slides, I always make sure there's a mix, and of genders. I probably push the females in positions of authority or doing competent activities because we have a lot of white male privileged around the world. I'm probably a bit biased towards pushing maybe either showing different gender roles or showing women in a more active position. I want a mix also of clothing. I want uncovered and covered women, because we have a lot of Arabs and I think it's important that they see women dressed in different ways as equally (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

I would probably choose an image that a person is Asian because the majority of my students are Asian, and I don't always use Caucasians because now we're becoming the minority group (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

I try to use a variety of culturally diverse role models in the images, so that's really big for me. I'll make sure that I have an African woman mechanic. I'll have an Asian family doing

something. Make sure that those visual models are really broadly representative, because I think that's really missing; or it becomes a bit of a cliché as well and you just have everything about an African family struggling with something. That's not right either. Making sure they're culturally appropriate (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

Georgie, Jenny and Lourdes shared their intention to feature visual texts with people of different gender, age and race, contributing to the theme of diversity and respect in the classroom. In addition, their personal views on gender equality guided their careful selection of visual texts (e.g., females in prominent roles), which would 'perhaps challenge stereotypes that remain present in many cultures' (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016). Although these teachers' ELT classrooms would not necessarily be considered the space to discuss issues of gender equality (unless it might be a topic in the syllabus), their purposeful selection of visual texts that convey their personal views relates to what Prosser (2007, p. 1) calls the 'visible but hidden curriculum'. In the context of education and the culture of a school, the hidden curriculum involves the messages contained in unspoken but influential forces that shape everyday activities. Such influential forces include people's behaviours, events, procedures, circumstances, objects and teaching materials; for instance, the visual texts that learners are exposed to in an institutional setting.

Georgie or Lourdes did not report discussing with their students the reasons why the visual texts they showed portrayed females in positions of power; yet, it could be argued that consistent viewing of this sort of scenario would send a positive message. These examples of practices put the spotlight on the critical dimension of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b), since careful selection of a visual text may indeed empower the teachers to discreetly teach the concept of equal gender opportunity – foreign to many adult English language learners. Importantly, for the students to be able to make meaning from these messages, they would need to rely on elements of the cultural dimension, such as connections to prior experiences in which they may have observed other women in prominent positions. The teachers' use of such materials may also provide opportunities for discussion of how values underpin visual texts, and in turn lead to respectful discussion of different positions on the topic, thus enacting the critical dimension of visual literacy.

6.3.2 Relevance to the learners' needs and teachers' pedagogical purposes

Another criterion in the participating teachers' visual text selection was relevance to the students' interests and needs. For example, Anastasia – who, as mentioned earlier, teaches English to international students in a pathway to undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in nursing – said that

the visual texts she chose needed to possess ‘*relevance to their future studies*’ (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016). In her case, illustrations of the human anatomy, health promotion materials, hospital layouts and coloured pain charts are frequent pedagogic aids. This reflects the focus in the ELICOS sector on preparing learners for their specialised academic studies. Here is an example:

Using rehabilitation pictures, I get them to talk about what's going on there, what's going on with this guy. What are the names of the aides that they're using in the rehab unit? Then, we also look at health symptoms evaluation charts. For example, this is a patient with dyspepsia. They have to locate where the pain is. We have other ones which is about intensity of pain. Sometimes and this is really interesting, we have you know the classic thing on the medication saying “Don't drink or drive with this, it could cause drowsiness”. There's a range of different symbols which I've been collecting from different countries . . . It's interesting that when they got tested, a lot of them didn't understand that it was really dangerous to drive on this medication, or to drink on this medication because they didn't understand the colour coding. Anyway, just so many sanctions around the universe out here of how we decode images (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

Anastasia demonstrates that her selection of visual texts is a carefully thought-out process, which reflects how important visual literacy is to her in the context of her students’ specialisation. Her interpretation of this use of visual texts combines aspects of the operational, cultural and critical dimensions of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b); these are, respectively, her students’ knowledge of discipline-specific language, the connections they make with conventions from other contexts, and the actions they take based on their critical interpretation of this visual information. Along similar lines, Hermione shares how purposefully she designs visual texts that suit her teaching aims:

There's photos I design to be discussed. For example, you see somebody doing something, what sort of things, what sort of words might you say here. There's somebody standing there with a baby, what would you say to a person with a new baby? You're practising the language of, ‘Oh, isn't she sweet. Is it a boy or a girl? How old are they?’ Practising that sort of language but it's all focused on producing language. Oral language but using visual cues so there's a lot of that (Hermione, Interview 15 – 26.05.2016).

In the example above, Hermione aimed her use of a visual text at facilitating her students’ understanding of social conventions, while teaching and drilling linguistic forms. This practice is

common among English language teachers (Atkinson, 2017; Riley & Douglas, 2017). Here, Hermione emphasises her view that visual texts act as cues to prompt spoken responses. This approach relates to the idea of visual literacy as ‘translating images into words’, explored earlier. From this perspective, the teacher relies on the students making connections to prior experiences and applying learnt knowledge of the English language to similar experiences in a new context.

Allegra and Jordan also provided examples of practices that relate to the interests of the student audiences they work with – adult migrants and refugees. Allegra maintained that visual texts should be ‘*related to the students’ everyday life, or their context, their environment*’ (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016). Jordan gave examples of her views on everyday interests and activities for migrant learners of English:

Images should contain the kinds of interests that our students have...these would be around food, cooking, shopping, market sort of shopping, and maybe some sort of ritual or religious themes, and obviously children (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

These teachers’ ideas of what is relevant to the interests of adult learners of English – and hence the choice of visual texts to use in their pedagogies – were informed by knowledge of the specific needs of their student cohorts. In this respect, these choices reflect the goal of ELICOS institutions of teaching the academic skills required to succeed in further studies. By contrast, the aim of Government-funded program providers is to equip learners with the general English language skills needed to adjust to life in Australia (e.g., to communicate within the community, shop, access welfare services and obtain employment). Connections to the critical dimension of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b) can be seen in these contrasting objectives in the two major industries within the adult ELT sector in Australia. In the two industries’ views, the relevance visual texts possess, and thus, the power they may afford to the two different student cohorts, is directly linked to academic or everyday-life/settlement goals.

In addition to considering the connections between the content of a visual text and the topics students may be interested in, with the following statements, Jacob, Julian and Hermione emphasise the need for visual texts to be relevant to the teachers’ pedagogical purpose:

From a teaching point of view, does my image lead the learner towards the goal I have set for my lesson aims? Is it more than just entertainment? Is it somehow helping the person when they look at this image? Does it have a job in my lesson, or is it just something clever on YouTube that I want to put because it fills up two minutes of lesson time? Is it going to be of

useful in terms of lesson time and preparation time? Is it worth the preparation time? Is it worth the lesson time? Is it usable? Can I keep it? Can I use it again? (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

The image in itself should be something that enables me to do something else. This is what I'm always looking for . . . Will it enable me to go somewhere else and to develop some sort of pathway that we can track along with the students? (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Depending on what language we were aiming at [I chose images], if you're looking at physical description then obviously people; if you're just wanting to talk about something else, you might make sure there was an action happening and get them to try and talk about it in the present continuous or whatever it is you're kind of aiming at (Hermione, Interview 15 – 26.05.2016).

In their visual text selection process, these teachers placed considerable importance on the 'usefulness' such texts possess in relation to their teaching objectives. Scholars such as Callow (2011), de Silva Joyce (2014) and Williams and Dwyer (1999) support this view, as they believe that in pedagogies that involve visual texts, the action of viewing alone does not automatically aid student comprehension. For Jacob, Julian and Hermione, it is essential that the visual texts they select support their teaching of traditional literacy skills. These views are less concerned with operational aspect of language and more interested on what visual texts enable them as educators and their learners to do.

6.3.3 Clarity to facilitate learners' meaning-making

Across the board, participants said that when they chose to use visual texts in their teaching they looked for bright, clear and colourful visual representations. For instance, Allegra said that she preferred to use '*very clear pictures, easy to see, to understand*' (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016). She explained that the visual texts she chooses for teaching purposes should not be 'too abstract', so her students would not be confused about what language point their teacher is trying to communicate. Similarly, Jordan, Lourdes and Mercedes explained their ideas of clarity in their visual text selection:

Images where the message is clear, so I suppose professional photographs taken in a way that it's very clear what the central theme is or the focus of the photograph is. They're clear, they're

attractive, and I know that the students will be able to glean something from them, understand something from them (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

[I prefer images] where there's not a lot of other background stuff happening. If you've got an image of a girl, but it's a girl playing, they might say the word play instead of the word girl. That is very clear, and it just depicts what you want (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

If it's a vocabulary activity, then I try and get those kind of stock images with the bright, white backgrounds so that you can really see that that's that element that we're focusing on and not any of the incidentals that can be so interesting for generating more discussion, but they don't necessarily help when you just want them to get one word out of it (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

Allegra, Lili, Jordan, Lourdes and Mercedes referred to clarity in terms of composition. They preferred visual texts containing a literal depiction of whatever topic they aimed to address in their lessons – pictures without too much ‘busyness’ in the background. They seemed to imply that their students lacked the capacity to draw the targeted meaning from intricate visual texts that contained more than the explicit subject of discussion, or from visual texts which may not help elicit the language feature being taught or drilled. The teachers were avoiding too many elements in the composition, which might enhance the contextual message of the visual text but may also create confusion. As such, they were not aiming to develop visual literacy skills (e.g., the ability to critically and meaningfully analyse the composition of a visual text) (Avgerinou, 2007; Flood, 2004; Serafini, 2017). Their focus was the development of traditional literacy skills (e.g., writing or speaking). These data suggest that visual text selection for classroom activities or resources is heavily influenced by teachers’ assumptions about their learners’ language abilities and literacy levels, as well as their pedagogical focus.

The participating teachers’ assumptions about their learners’ capacity to read and interpret visual texts seemed to match the predetermined learning outcomes in curricula for different language levels (e.g., beginners, intermediate, advanced). For instance, all of the study participants who worked in a Government-Funded Registered Training Organisation (RTO) had taught various modules of the CSWE, which – as mentioned in the literature review – is the accredited national AMEP curriculum (NSW AMES [Adult Migrant English Service], 1993). One of the modules in the *Course in preliminary spoken and written English* (AMEP pre-beginners’ level) involves the learning outcome ‘learners should be able to recognise common visual symbols’ (Department of Education and Training, 2013). This module

is aimed at learners with no prior English language training. Meanwhile, in the more advanced *Certificate III in spoken and written English*, students are required to 'identify features of a narrative image' (Department of Education and Training, 2013). It can then be argued that such distinctions permeate teachers' views on the types of visual texts their students would be able to deal with. The statements below illustrate this point:

Depending on the level and the lesson, if anything is vocabulary-related, I always use pictures...because I think that that's maybe the easiest way for your brain and the quickest path for your brain to connect with the word's meaning (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

I think of the students to make sure it [the image] is right for them. With beginner level you have to be careful that you're going to move in a direction that you want to take the students, to get whatever message it is that you're trying to present (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

For lower levels, it [the aim of using an image] will be just being able to draw a diagram with ideas that you can connect to the picture. With higher level students, it will be actually turning it into a story, which you can tell . . . If the level is a bit higher, I can use YouTube videos to start a conversation, because that will throw in some ideas (Kylie, Interview 4 – 6.04.2016).

For me at a lower level, my body is my visual tool for a lot of things. I turn into a mime. Images as well, especially now. When I first started teaching, having a computer in the classroom wasn't always an option . . . Then when you get to higher levels it's much more video-oriented things. In my top level classes, for example, I like using TED Talks and things like that (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

The data above shows that Georgie, Lili, Kylie and Lola also distinguished between 'simple' and 'complex' visual texts, thinking that the former are more suitable for learners in low English language levels (i.e., beginners) and the latter for advanced students. Congruently, these views imply that English language students at beginner levels have a limited ability to process new information from something presented in the visual form. Again, these assumptions may overlook the capacity that adult learners have to make meaning (Mayer, 2016; Palis & Quiros, 2014; Tett, 2013) – in this case, from visual texts – despite not possessing the English language skills to articulate their understanding in spoken or written form. Furthermore, according to Yano (1994), simplification of text (and in this

case visual texts) may not necessarily advance language learning. The following excerpt exemplifies how in her visual text selection, Jenny ensures clarity for the students:

The images I choose are not terribly complex...It might be a simple day out at the beach, you know, something that's obvious because we're all at the beach...It is mum and dad, the kids, the shovel and the spoon. Literal. I mean literal. Abstraction is very difficult for them. I could talk with an abstraction to them but really, it's too complicated, so I don't . . . I'll watch it [a video] and I'll make questions and then they have to listen to it . . . Students have to look at it [and] they have to listen...then they have to answer the questions and usually they have to watch and listen to it two or three times before they understand (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

Jenny selects visual texts with literal depictions of the topic of classroom discussion under the impression that her students would be unable to 'cope' with more abstract representations. This approach may limit opportunities for learners to expand their merely operational language abilities, and engage in richer ways of using language, such as making inferences or creating a narrative. In contrast, Lourdes seemed to have a different approach to 'simplifying things'. She did not assume that abstraction was too hard for her students. In fact, she introduced them to a number of certain conventions by which people communicate visually in the Australian context. She said:

Some of the course evaluations are in their languages [other than English], but a lot of the students I work with can't read . . . I started simplifying down things like 'satisfied', 'highly satisfied', 'dissatisfied', and I had symbols of the smiley face, and a straight line and the frowning face, and I used those, but for every one of those I had a photo of a person. First of all, they [the students] looked at the photo of the person, for example, really smiling, big smile, laughing, and he was highly satisfied, or he rated the program as excellent. Then we showed what the matching emoji face would be for that, the symbol for that. That would be on the piece of paper they needed to fill in. I keep the posters of those up in the classroom, and then we do practices of how to circle 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 under those faces. How do you feel? Do you feel like this guy smiling, or do you feel like this person, frowning and crying over here? (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

Here, Lourdes explains a pedagogic strategy that addresses her students' limited language skills, which are needed to interpret written information and produce a coherent response. She found a method

to assist beginner level learners with low literacy in establishing connections between their judgements (e.g., being satisfied or dissatisfied about a service), written texts in the target language, numbers, and culturally-based visual conventions – such as smiling or frowning faces. She then highlighted the importance she places on using different types of visual texts:

Even when I'm using symbols or emojis, or whatever you want to call them, I find that with very low-literacy students and those who have limited or no prior formal education, I still come back to actual photos and pictures, real representation first, to teach them what that symbol is. Then from then, once they've got the symbol, once you learn a visual symbol, you don't easily forget it, not like a word (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

It appears that Lourdes' use of visual texts relies on scaffolding learning to interpret visuals. In this instance, literal depictions (e.g., photographs) would be the entry point to explain a word and/or a concept. Then, as learners progress, she introduces more advanced language – more abstract symbols, such as an emoji. This particular approach stood out among other participants' views, as she responded to her students' low proficiency in reading, speaking and writing, to incorporate the visual literacy skill of deconstructing imagery (Flood, 2004; Serafini, 2017). As a result, her students could purposefully communicate with others.

As seen in the data, in considering the level of simplicity or complexity of visual texts, most of the participating teachers highlighted links between the notion of clarity of composition and their perceptions of their students' language skills. Examining these views through the lens of Green's 3D model (1988, 2012b), the participants' concerns centre on an element at the heart of the critical dimension – power. Power here pertains to the affordances that making meaning from a simple or complex visual text offer to both teacher and learner. Power is facilitated by teachers' and students' knowledge of the visual language in the composition of the texts used in class, which in turn, is informed by the prior experiences of all parties involved. The following section crystallises ideas that emerged in the participating teachers' reported practices, demonstrating how they might apply the criteria they used in their visual text selection.

6.4 Teachers' representations of concepts through visual texts

This section reports on the focus groups discussions about the rationale behind each participant's chosen personal representations of a concept, and illustrates their exchange of ideas about these. The discussions helped me gain rich insight into how understandings of visual literacy – initially discussed

in the interviews – were both supported and challenged during the focus groups by the teachers’ views on the different visual texts they selected to communicate their diverse representations of the idea of community. As explained in Section 4.5.2.4 – Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), to keep the discussions focused and provide everyone with opportunities to voice their views, I employed the set of prescribed VTS questions with everyone as they viewed each of the visual representations. These questions were:

- What’s going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find? (Yenawine, 2014, p. 167).

6.4.1 Unique representations of the idea of ‘community’

As explained earlier, some participants agreed that the process of meaning making is inherently attached to the specific cultural context in which visual texts exist. For instance, to explain what the word ‘community’ represented to her, Lourdes searched for *‘a picture in an African village all coming together for something special . . . and it will encapsulate a lot of things in the one picture’* (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016) (see Figure 10).

Lourdes’ colleagues’ comments included both literal descriptions of the composition in the visual text selected, as well as their subjective interpretations, seemingly based on their understandings of the context where the photograph was taken. Lili proposed *‘There seems to be one person cooking, and the others are standing around in anticipation’* (Lili, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016), to which Winnifred added *‘They are clapping...Maybe it is some celebration. Maybe it’s some ritual with the cooking. Maybe there is something special about what she’s cooking’* (Winnifred, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). Then, Jenny admitted that when she first saw the photograph, she had assumed that the people seemed very hungry and were happy *‘because maybe they’re going to be fed. Maybe it’s the first time they’ve had rice in six months’* (Jenny, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).



Figure 10. Gov-Fund. Focus group visual text selected by Lourdes
Malawi village woman stirs a pot while community members gather around. Retrieved 2 August, 2016, from <https://hiveminer.com/Tags/dinner%2Cmalawi>

Jenny was surprised by the accuracy of her own interpretation when Lourdes explained that her ex-partner was Malawian, and when she had visited his village, the season had indeed been very dry, hence people had not eaten rice for months. Lourdes shared that it had taken her a while to find the specific visual representation of community she had in mind:

It was hard to find because you could look at that and say it's a woman cooking with everyone watching, but she is probably doing one bit. The next person jumps in . . . With the cooking, everyone had to take part...I had to take part. They'd throw a knife at me. It was my turn to do this until the smoke got in my eyes too much, then the next person took over, and the next person went in. Then we all ate together. Then we all danced together. We all celebrated together (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Upon reflecting on her chosen photograph, Lourdes admitted that although her example could be seen by others as a too idealised idea of community, she thought this type of scenario '*was the most collaborative living*' that she had ever seen (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). This photograph had reminded her of what it felt like to be part of a culture like the one in her depiction, hence it was particularly meaningful to her. How she looked for a familiar scenario to embody a concept that could be represented in such varied ways matched her idea that visual literacy assists people in making meaning from visual texts by building connections between these and experiences

in their everyday lives. Importantly, she contextualised her thinking to her adult migrant English language classroom. She argued that using this photograph to represent community might *'work for some students, but not for others'* (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016), alluding to the fact that her learners are culturally and ethnically diverse. She explained that if she decided to use this visual text in class, she would say *'This is my idea of what a community is. Show me some of what your ideas are'* (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

In a similar fashion to Lourdes, Mercedes selected and interpreted the visual representation of 'her' community along very specific lines. She searched specifically for visual texts that depicted a 'women's Frisbee team' (see Figure 11).



Figure 11. ELICOS Focus group visual text selected by Mercedes
Women's frisbee team. Retrieved 2 August, 2016, from <http://d36m26kvepgv.cloudfront.net/uploads/media>

Prior to Mercedes' explanation, upon viewing a photograph of several women on a sporting lawn, Jacob suggested a few ideas: that this had to do with athletics, or it was some sort of game and that the women were *'watching sport'* (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Meanwhile, Kylie was more specific; she thought *'It's a Frisbee game. Looks like Brisbane'* (Kylie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Mercedes explained that the women depicted in the photograph were *'people who play the same sport and they all live in different parts of the country, and this is one training camp where they all come to one city'* (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). She said she had recognised some of the players in the picture and shared that they are her friends from various cities around Australia. She explained how she came to select this particular visual text:

When I heard 'community' I thought about a community that I'm a part of . . . We don't all live in the same place, but when you're travelling overseas, if you get in touch with someone that plays Frisbee – because it's an international sport – you can just get in touch and say “Hi, I'm from Australia. Can I come and stay with you?” or “Show me around your town” (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).

Mercedes' representation supported her ideas about visual literacy. At her interview, she shared her stance on how people interpret a visual text depending on the context in which they see it. As a case in point, while for her this photograph embodied her idea of community, the other focus group participants seemed somehow perplexed by her explanation, as they did not know much about Frisbee as a competitive sport. Nevertheless, Kylie – who knew the context – admitted that her comment had been influenced by her prior knowledge of this aspect of her colleague's life. She knew Mercedes played Frisbee, hence she had suggested that was the activity the people in the photograph practised, even though there was no sport equipment depicted in it. This made Mercedes wonder if her students would 'get it' if she chose to use this visual text to explain her idea of community in class:

I wonder how much my students understand. If my students ask me about my free time or my hobbies or whatever, and I tell them that I play competitive sport, I wonder if that has the same meaning to them. It's not like a professional elite sport, but it's not just battling the shuttlecock around in your pyjamas out the front of your house (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).

Here, once again, Mercedes supported her views about visual texts being culturally-bound. In this case, she was not sure whether her English language students would be able to make meaning from her picture, or rather decode the message she wanted to convey, regardless of how limited or advanced their language abilities might be. In this case, although the teachers who participated in the focus group were familiar with the visual language system (Erwig et al., 2017) being used to understand the composition in the photograph, each of their views was different, as the process of representation is informed by personal beliefs as much as it is by shared experiences (Hall, 1996, 2013). In other words, since their interpretations of the photograph were based on their own experiences, not all decoded the message as intended by Mercedes – her idea of community.

Similar to Lourdes with her photograph of a Malawian community, Mercedes reflected on what would be required for her students to engage with her photograph of the women's Frisbee team in

meaningful ways. She took into account not only the mechanical aspect of learners' understanding of imagery that represents sport, but also the need for her students to access knowledge about competitive Frisbee as a sport, and connect this notion to their own experiences to then formulate and express their own ideas. These capabilities relate to the cultural and critical dimensions of visual literacy, respectively. Importantly, unlike Lourdes' picture, which could be considered a more literal or accessible depiction of community (i.e., a group or people of mixed genders and various ages smiling and gathered around food), interpreting Mercedes' visual text would be heavily reliant on her personal experience and knowledge. Without her explanation of why this picture of a group of women in sporting gear on a field looking at the same focal point means community to her, it would be virtually impossible for her students to understand that she belongs to a team of competitive female Frisbee players.

Adding to everyone's interpretations of the community of women's Frisbee players, Georgie said '*I like that it's women. I always like bringing strong female role models into class discussions*'. She also argued that because some of the players had their arms crossed and looked serious, they were thinking '*Oh, God, I hope it's not my turn*' (Georgie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Mercedes found Georgie's 'reading' of the players' body language very accurate, and explained: '*It's a selection camp, so they're all being watched if they're good enough to make the teams*' (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Both Georgie's comments and Mercedes' explanation presented a glaring contrast to Jacob's interpretation whereby the women were watching, based perhaps on the fact that there was no sporting equipment on sight.

Yet another contrasting representation of the same concept, Lili's chosen photograph illustrated her idea of community, portraying a group of adults in a classroom environment, holding a certificate and smiling at the camera (see Figure 12). Unlike the visual texts Lourdes and Mercedes chose – which reflected experiences unique to them – Lili's photograph seemed to have sparked opinions and feelings common to all participants in the focus group, who were teachers of adult migrants from diverse cultural backgrounds. For instance, Winnifred thought '*It looks like a class in our centre*' (Winnifred, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016), and Jenny and Lourdes reflected:

I'm thinking about the notion of community. You can have a small community. You can have a cyberspace community. You can have Facebook as a community . . . If you think about the notion of what is the sense of community, what's the definition of community and how do we form it? Does it mean a group of people in a certain place with a similar sort of ideal? . . . I

think our role as a teacher is managing a community and creating a community (Jenny, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

It's so interesting how it relates to experience because we're teachers in the community setting. To me, I look at that picture, and it comes alive. I can hear what they're saying and what they've been through . . . We understand what diversity is in that room (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).



Figure 12. Gov-Fund. Focus group visual text selected by Lili Adult ESL classroom. Retrieved 1 September, 2016, from <http://emersonhouston.org/social-action/english-classes-esl-for-adults/>

Evident was the strong view of the adult classroom as a community formed by individuals, who may not share cultural or ethnic backgrounds, but who work together toward a goal – learning English. For Lili, a community could be a small number of people, such as a classroom, *'learning from one another, tolerating one another and tolerating different personality types but managing it'* (Lili, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Explained during her interview, Lili's definition of visual literacy was primarily concerned with operational competencies (i.e., the ability to present a message using visual texts as an instrument). Nevertheless, her way of illustrating the concept of community related to elements of the cultural and critical dimensions involved in engaging meaningfully with visual texts. She described her chosen photograph as *'quite close to home'* (Lili, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016), alluding to the fact that she is an adult English language teacher, and acknowledging that this meaning would come through more explicitly for her than for her students. She argued that if she were to use this visual

text to illustrate the concept of community in class, it would not stand alone, and she would need to do *'a lot of pre-teaching'* (Lili, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). This process would include explaining to her adult migrant students – some of whom come from completely different education systems overseas or have no prior schooling – what a certificate is, what it symbolises in Australian culture and what obtaining one at the end of their course means. Making these connections would contribute to her learners' processes in socially constructing knowledge, and therefore to their familiarity with the language that would allow them to critically engage with this visual text and produce a response.

To visually represent her idea of community, Winnifred selected a photograph of a group of people in a garden, smiling at the camera with their hands up in the air (see Figure 13). She explained that during her teaching career, she had met several migrant families who lived in Government-funded community housing, and since they did not have a lot of room in their homes, they often worked together in a community garden or in communal green areas. She said: *'for me, when I think of community, I just think of a community garden where people just come together and grow stuff'* (Winnifred, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).



Figure 13. Gov-Fund. Focus group visual text selected by Winnifred Community garden. Retrieved 1 September, 2016, from <https://www.motheearthliving.com/gardening>

Winnifred said she did not think this was the best visual representation of community, but explained that she had searched for visual texts that related somehow to her ideals as an English language teacher, and would also be relevant to her students' interests. In this particular case, she saw her chosen photograph as:

A bunch of people who have come together to work in the garden for the day. They're just very happy that they've achieved something. It's building towards something at the end, which might be fresh veggies for some family or for some friends, or even just socialising and coming together to do something that they all enjoy (Winnifred, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Winnifred's representation was influenced by personal views of herself as a teacher of adult migrants, which she later shared. She believed her role of instructor to people who often came to her classroom with no prior education included: facilitating activities that could assist language learners in adjusting to a new environment, instigating the idea of group work, and fostering collegiality amongst peers. Her illustration of community related to these ideas, which also resonated with her colleagues. Lili commented about the different people portrayed in the picture: *'I really like that cultural diversity because that's what our community has become'* (Lili, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Jenny shared that she did not think Winnifred's selected photograph of the community garden could help her get the message 'community' across in her teaching. Lourdes concurred and explained that she would not have chosen this visual text alone as a language teaching tool, arguing that *'they wouldn't get the word community necessarily'* (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). She suggested that it would need to be part of a selection of pictures to scaffold the concept of community through eliciting familiar language. She was confident that although teachers may interpret the picture as 'community in the garden', the students' primary focus – and relevant vocabulary they might come up with – would be around the idea of 'garden'. When asked how she would incorporate the visual text into her own pedagogies, Winnifred answered:

We started off [the focus group] with what you think community is, so yeah, that's what I think. If you told me you were going to be teaching the word community or the meaning of community in a classroom, then it probably would be one of many pictures, but it wouldn't be the only picture because then that's me saying that's community (Winnifred, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Here, Winnifred reiterated views she expressed during her interview, arguing that when she chooses visual texts for a lesson, she thinks about her student population: *'about how to get the message across, and which image would best get the message across. Is it too much noise? Are they going to understand that?'* (Winnifred, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). She said she tries to pre-empt

all sorts of questions before she settles on the one visual text that she thinks would represent what she wants to teach or what kind of message she wants to communicate. The teachers' hesitation about the picture's potential ambiguity, and whether it would successfully explain the concept of community, reinforced their view of the use of visual texts to achieve learning outcomes related to the development of traditional literacy skills, rather than to teach or help develop visual literacy.

The following discussion is about a visual text selected by Georgie, which all participants in the ELICOS Focus Group seemed to agree would resonate among English language students. This was a photograph of a collection of cooking ingredients laid on a table and seemingly being used as toppings for pizzas (see Figure 14). Georgie explained that she often uses food as a topic in class because she felt *'it doesn't need explaining, they [the students] already have something that they can engage with. Everyone eats'* (Georgie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).



Figure 14. ELICOS Focus group visual text selected by Georgie
People making pizza. Retrieved 2 August, 2016, from
http://66.media.tumblr.com/e5be530a45df356dadd7efb4cf7dbf21/tumblr_inline_mm4qsmNK1q1qz4rgp.jpg

Georgie used this photograph of 'pizza making' to represent community as it was something which – in her view – people from all cultural backgrounds could relate to: cooking and eating. She thought this visual text could represent community because *'food is a big part of communities. It also can create a sense of community. It's a really easy way to bridge cultural gaps, often'* (Georgie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Although this statement was congruent with her interview in which she stated that when she uses visual texts in the classroom she makes sure they are relevant to people of

all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, it could be argued that this 'pizza making' photograph might only resonate with learners who have been exposed to this 'Western' practice. Jacob agreed that eating is something all people tend to do together. With this in mind, he inferred:

It looks like a family, maybe, because the hand on the right looks slightly smaller . . . I see a farmhouse kitchen in a nice, sunny house and lots of noise. I hear lots of "Mum! He's got his fingers in the grapes!" (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).

In contrast to the photograph of the community garden, which made Winnifred wonder '*Could it be misconstrued? Could it be misunderstood?*' (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016), all participants in the ELICOS focus group agreed that the picture of pizza being prepared by a few people could be very useful in eliciting the idea of community in their classrooms. However, Kylie disagreed, stating that this visual text was indeed too culture-specific. She described it as a typical Italian scenario, inferring that it would not be so straightforward for students less influenced by Western culture.

The views presented above provided important insights into the participating teachers' thinking about visual text selection in the adult ELT context. Importantly, keeping the focus groups discussions centred about visual representations of community allowed for different perspectives on one specific concept to emerge; thus, the participants were able to compare, justify and comment on their choices of text. In addition, while the focus groups' questions were about visual texts, views on visual literacy which had been discussed individually during the prior interviews, were both reiterated and challenged. The first key point that emerged from the focus groups is that, when the teachers set out to communicate personal representations of a concept, they framed these drawing on their own life experiences and relying on their spoken explanations to justify their choice of visual text. Yet, as they were faced with the prospect of employing such texts in their classroom, they reconsidered, assuming that the English language learners they taught, would not be able to decode their intended message without the support of written or spoken language.

The second important finding drawn from the focus groups data is that the participating teachers seemed to share ideas about what visual texts are better suited to the adult English language classroom. Congruent with views expressed at the interviews on the need for visual texts to be relevant to the learner's needs, there seemed to be consensus on the opinion that 'universal' topics such as 'food' or a 'group of students in class' resonate with both English language teachers and learners. It could then be argued that the teachers see a correlation between the degree of complexity

of a visual text and levels of literacy. In other words, they might see themselves as more able to make meaningful inferences from illustrations of very specific topics (e.g., a Malawian community or a competitive Frisbee team) than their students, who do not possess the same level of traditional literacy skills.

6.4.2 Considering student diversity in visual text selection

Diversity of ethnicity, age and gender was an evident feature in the visual texts that two of the focus group participants selected to represent their idea of community. Jenny chose a photograph portraying roughly one hundred people clustered together, showing a mix of men, women and children of various skin colours (see Figure 15). Here, she explains her rationale:

I suppose I'm thinking about my students. They live really closely together. They have a variety of cultures . . . This is a large group of families with different nationalities. There is not much else going on. The reason I chose that is because living closely together for our community to work effectively, you have to tolerate your neighbour and not be a racist or discriminatory in any way. I think that's the effectiveness of a good community (Jenny, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Jenny described how the arrangement of the photograph encapsulated her idea of community: *'Having a cluster of people together, they become one as opposed to disparate things. Having that bunch like a bunch of flowers or group of people that are holding together, a tight knit community, that's what it looks like'* (Jenny, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). Her colleague Lili welcomed this idea, and said that what she liked about this particular visual text was that the people portrayed looked like 'real people':

I think when you're teaching low proficiency students there is a tendency to have quite babyish images. I always try to really steer clear of anything that looks like it's from primary school (Lili, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Here, Lili indicated her intention to avoid English language teaching materials created for young audiences, which may include cartoons or basic drawings. She had previously expressed this at her interview, where she said she preferred to use literal, clear depictions of people and things in her classroom.



Figure 15. Gov-Fund. Focus group visual text selected by Jenny Culturally diverse community I. Retrieved 1 September, 2016, from <http://www.allanstanglin.com/wp-content/uploads/CommunityCrowd3.jpg>

Looking at the body language of the people portrayed in Jenny's visual text, Lourdes elaborated:

They are all looking up at the camera, so it depends on how you're framing it. It could just be they're looking at the camera, but because of the way it's angled up as if you are all looking up, you're looking towards something, some shared goal (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

All the participants in this focus group agreed that Lourdes' was a perfectly plausible interpretation of the photograph – that this could be a community striving toward a common goal. A strong connection to the cultural dimension (Green, 1988, 2012b) emerges here, as it can be argued that the agreed-upon idea of a community of learners was derived from the participants' shared views and experiences as teachers.

Selecting a similarly arranged photograph to Jenny's (see Figure 16), Kylie described how she had represented her idea of community:

I see kids there, I see young people, I see elderly people. They're obviously not related, as in family, it's a community . . . They somehow got together (Kylie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).



Figure 16. ELICOS Focus group visual text selected by Kylie
Culturally diverse community II. Retrieved 2 August, 2016, from <http://www.wccnet.edu/community-enrichment/media/images/ce-about-us.png>

Despite appearing very similar to Jenny's chosen visual text in terms of the subject – a group of ethnically diverse people – this photograph of another group dressed in colourful shirts and smiling at the camera generated contrasting opinions among the four focus group participants. At first glance this visual text looked like a simple depiction of a group of people and a plain background. However, upon closer inspection, apart from Kylie – to whom it was clear that this represented the idea of community – none of her colleagues agreed with this interpretation. For instance, Jacob found it humorous, calling it a photograph of *'the United Colours of Benetton'* (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). With this comment, Jacob highlighted the over-accentuated presence of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in colourful clothing, a common feature of photographs displayed in magazines and billboards for famous advertising campaigns by the global fashion brand United Colours of Benetton. Jacob explained his interpretation:

There's black people and white people. The bloke in the middle might be Asian, but it's difficult to see. There's none that look to me ethnically Chinese or Vietnamese or Indochinese or Japanese. The lady, the smiling woman right in the middle, with the styled red-brown, auburn hair, tilting her head, she might be Asian . . . A lot of Europeans. A lot of Caucasians in that picture. That seems like a bit self-elitist (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).

Jacob did not believe this visual text was a realistic depiction of community. He argued that because nobody looked evidently Chinese in this photograph, this could not represent a multicultural

community, such as those abounding in the city of Melbourne (where this study took place) (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Georgie concurred: *'You look at it and immediately miss the Asian people, because we come from Melbourne and when you walk out on the street, I'm used to seeing more Asian background people'* (Georgie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Mercedes also thought that this visual text looked foreign, saying: *'looks like it's symbolically multi-cultural. Probably American. Maybe it has been staged'* (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). She also added that whoever composed the photograph had probably chosen bright primary colours to make it look really happy.

The focus group participants discussed visual elements in both photographs, such as the arrangement of the people portrayed, their facial expressions, the colours used, and the camera angle and background. Interpretations of these visual features involve employing what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) call the 'visual grammar' of an image; that is, the visual conventions that enable a person to competently engage in the process of meaning making by viewing visual texts. Understanding and employing a visual grammar is linked here to Green's (1988, 2012b) operational dimension, in which knowledge of a particular language system enables people to encode and decode a message. Connections to the cultural dimension were also present when the specific features in this visual text prompted the teachers to make judgements about why the subjects were looking in a specific direction and what the photographer – or whoever commissioned the photograph – wanted to convey.

In addition to their observations about the composition of the visual texts, Jacob and Georgie made remarks about the disconnection between the ethnicities represented in Kylie's visual text and the city of Melbourne – the context in which they live and operate as adult English language teachers. They implied that these photographs would be unsuitable for the context of their pedagogies. More specifically, they suggested that using a visual text that does not explicitly depict South East Asian and Asian people to explain the concept of community would not be their first choice, given that Melbourne is a city with a high population of international students and immigrants from Vietnam, Thailand and China. Here, the teachers' personal views and shared experiences living and teaching in Melbourne, served to help them identify (or at least speculate about) 'the intentions, desires and purposes of the image-maker, as well as our own personal responses and interpretations' (Callow, 2012, p. 74). Here, the cultural and critical dimensions of literacy play a role in the connections the teachers' observations highlighted between the syntax of a visual text (i.e. its composition and

structure) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), the cultural context and the informed decisions they would make should they decide to employ the visual text in question in their pedagogies.

Based on the discussion about whether Kylie's visual text would be suitable to teach the concept of community to their adult English language learners, Lourdes reflected on how the focus group dynamic had evolved from 'show us your visual representation of community' to 'how would you use this visual text in your adult ELT classroom?':

What's really interesting is the first part of the process. You [the researcher] asked us to think about what in fact is a community for us. If you'd asked me to find some images to teach the word community to others, I would have chosen probably different images and groups of images. What something means to me is not what it necessarily means to the students (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016).

Lourdes' reflection reiterated her earlier view on the subjectivity of visual texts in adult ELT. She explained that this is the reason why she spends hours searching for visual texts that she considers appropriate to use with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and with different levels of language proficiency (Lourdes, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). Jenny agreed with Lourdes, saying that if she were to use in class either of the two visual texts containing groups of people looking up, she would try to keep it as simple as possible for her students, given that their low-level English language abilities and limited vocabulary would only allow them to say: '*Many, many, many man, woman, baby many*', until they got the bigger picture of community with some scaffolding (Jenny, Gov-Fund. Focus Group – 01.09.2016). This observation highlights the view she expressed during her interview, where she indicated that the complexity of visual texts needs to be taken into consideration when using them with students with different levels of English language proficiency.

6.4.3 A visual text 'too hard to use in class'?

In this section, I report an animated discussion among the participants in the ELICOS Focus Group, sparked by Jacob's visual text selection to represent his idea of community. Evident was the teachers' reflection on pedagogic implications, as they all hypothesised what could happen if they used this particular visual text in their own classrooms. In addition, the discussion brought up views linked to the affective dimension (Callow, 2005), which involves individual reactions a person can present toward the aesthetic features of a visual text, or ideas the text may stimulate in relation to the viewer's particular circumstances and context, prior experiences and/or their knowledge of historical events.

Inspired by his university studies of European History, Jacob chose to represent his idea of community with what he described as 'communist art'. His visual representation was a photograph of a poster depicting a bearded man with a hat and a shotgun, holding a red flag with white text in French language that read *Vive la Commune* (In English 'Long live the commune') (see Figure 17). This illustration is an example of visual texts that emerged in 1871, which symbolised the period during which the working class of Paris organised to take power and establish a workers' government – the Paris Commune (Gould, 1991).



Figure 17. ELICOS Focus group visual text selected by Jacob
Vive la Commune. Retrieved 2 August, 2016, from <http://www.skibbereeneagle.ie/ireland/the-internationale/>

Georgie admired the illustration. She asserted: *'It's very beautiful. It looks like a linoprint'* (Georgie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Mercedes added: *'I don't know if it's trying to look old or if it is really genuinely old. Could be late 1800s, could be mid-1900s'* (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Reacting to these aesthetic appraisals, Kylie contextualised the visual text to her own worldview. She shared that she had grown up in the former Soviet Union, seeing this type of illustration on the streets. This particular picture scared her, as it represented the opposite of community. She explained that it meant *'nothing good...You will be forced to do something you don't want to do'* (Kylie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Puzzled by this reaction, Mercedes questioned Jacob's choice of visual text and asked: *'Sorry, how did you get that there was a sense of community from this kind of artwork?'* (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Noticeably passionate about this topic, Jacob stated: *'this picture is loaded with history for me, and when you say*

“community”, that’s immediately what I think. Just from a personal point of view...I’m a communist at heart’ (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).

Examining the participants’ comments about the visual text through the lens of affect (Callow, 2005; Cole, 2012; Cole & Yang, 2008; Deleuze, 1995), they show a connection between emotion and communication; that is, their judgements about the *Vive la Commune* illustration demonstrate that the ways they feel about it are grounded in experiences, beliefs and aesthetic values. In this scenario, affect adds complexity to the operational, cultural and critical dimensions (Green, 1988, 2012b). Here, Jacob’s personal representation of community generated contrasting reactions among his peers. Two of them – Georgie and Mercedes – decoded a message by engaging with the visual language used in the composition of the illustration, and shared their appreciation of its aesthetic value. In contrast, Kylie’s personal connections to negative connotations associated with this sort of visual text were the source of her unfavourable reaction. This is a reminder that visual literacy is essential in understanding a visual text within different contexts, and in critically thinking about its intended message.

Despite the reactions this visual text seemed to have awakened, the next part of the discussion unified all the participants’ opinions. I asked Jacob if he thought there was a way he could incorporate this illustration in one of his English language lessons. He answered: *‘I would never use that with English learners. You would spend the rest of the day explaining history’* (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Georgie also thought it would be too difficult to use this visual text in class as *‘It’s got too many layered meanings’* (Georgie, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016). Mercedes made a point to clarify that the illustration had not been chosen with students in mind, saying that if they had known they were going to be asked how they would incorporate these visual texts in their lessons, they would have probably chosen different visual representations of community (Mercedes, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016).

There are further implications in the teachers’ comments on the *Vive la Commune* illustration. First, it could be argued that they consider themselves more visually literate than their students, not necessarily because they possess more advanced meaning-making and visual analysis skills, but because of the perception that they may be better equipped to articulate verbally what they understand from a complex visual text, thanks to their higher proficiency in English language skills.

The second implication is that they believe their approach to visual text selection may limit their learners’ opportunities to develop visual literacy competencies. In other words, rather than taking the time to explore which visual texts might contribute to developing visual literacy skills in their learners,

teachers choose to incorporate in their lessons ‘easily digestible’ visual texts that any student could relate to (e.g., classmates holding a certificate, ethnically-diverse people smiling). This would, in turn, help them avoid deviating from the intended outcomes of the lesson, such as learning new vocabulary or revising a grammar point. The following section turns the attention onto examining practices that facilitate ‘encoding’ messages through visual texts, in addition to making meaning from them.

6.5 Visual text creation in ELT classroom practices

As explored in the literature review, a visually literate individual not only displays the skills to interpret visual texts, but also possesses the ability to produce their own visual representations in order to effectively communicate meaning to different audiences (Callow, 2012; Debes, 1969; Flood, 2004; Kędra, 2018; Serafini, 2017). With this in mind, I enquired if the participating teachers’ classroom practices allowed opportunities for their students to communicate in language forms other than written or oral, and if awareness of this affected their perspectives on visual literacy. The teachers’ responses illustrate the extent to which curricula at the core of their adult ELT institutional contexts might facilitate or limit the development of visual literacy, and whether the production of visual texts was fostered among their cohorts of adult overseas students, migrants and refugees. The section draws on data categorised under the theme ‘visual text production in adult ELT supports reading, writing, listening and speaking’.

The participating teachers reported a variety of experiences with in-class and extracurricular activities that involved creating visual texts. I synthesised them in three broad areas of analysis: (1) due to curriculum restrictions, adult English language learners had few opportunities to express themselves in other ways than via written and spoken word, both via printed and digital media. Where self-expression through visual production occurred, this was often a non-assessed extra-curricular activity; (2) where students were required to include visual texts as part of an assessment task, this was primarily to facilitate or support oral and written production; and (3) in assessment tasks where students could express themselves through visual texts, this was optional.

6.5.1 No room for student-created visual texts in the classroom

Three teachers – Winnifred, Anastasia and Lola – did not believe that the adult English language programs they taught allowed for assessment tasks or classroom activities that required their students to express themselves through the production of visual texts:

I don't think they get a lot of opportunities to express their learning through images, or express their understanding through images. Yeah, I can't really think of anything . . . Most of their responses are written or oral (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

Not at all . . . Yeah, that's probably a gap in the curriculum there. To be honest, I think that getting students to produce images would be a really useful thing to do, and I guess we can do it as a class activity and build on. Like we use this is a launching pad...that sort of thing. To be frank, we have so many learning outcomes that we have to plough, plough, plough through (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

I can't really think of too many examples, unless, we ask them to research something occasionally and they might be showing each other stuff on their phone. Other than that, can't think of many other examples where they provide the image (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

Apart from Lola's account of occasional student use of mobile devices to search visual texts, these three teachers did not recall classroom activities which provided opportunities for their students to express understanding by producing visual texts. They explained that the curricula that inform their practices do not explicitly ask for visual responses from learners. Anastasia found the volume of subject-specific learning outcomes posed to her students of English for nursing did not leave any room in the syllabus to incorporate classroom activities that included visual production.

Hermione, Jordan and Lourdes did provide some examples of activities where students used visual texts to communicate ideas. These were, however, extra-curricular activities, which were not graded, nor were they integrated into the learning outcomes in their courses:

One of the things I do is a newsletter. I always ask them to include a photo, because my idea is that the newsletter will be engaging for other students to read . . . There is basically not a lot of visual literacy either taught or discussed (Hermione, Interview 15 – 26.05.2016).

In terms of students producing their own pictures – either through drawing or cutting and pasting visuals from the internet – there is not much of that . . . There was one project which I did with a group of our students as an add-on, as an extra [-curricular] thing, which was to do with teachers for refugees. Students drew pictures about what it's like to be an asylum seeker, and then their pictures would be displayed at some sort of rally . . . I think getting students to draw in class would be a good activity (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

We'll do things for special occasions like make a card . . . [Sometimes] we've got teacher students coming three or four days a week, so for one afternoon they do creative visual stuff and activities, which is fantastic (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

Here, the teachers explain how they leverage learners' personal worldviews to encourage self-expression through visual texts. The activities they conducted enabled their students to use different sources and media to produce visual texts, which represented concepts – such as respect and freedom – and experiences like enduring the hardship of being an asylum seeker. Nevertheless, despite the level of student engagement reported by the educators, and the opportunities presented to integrate the development of visual literacy skills as the students honed their traditional language skills, these activities were extra-curricular, not systematically incorporated into lessons, and not streamlined across all student audiences in a particular program or language level.

6.5.2 Creating visual texts to enhance reading, writing, listening and speaking

In other cases where classroom activities involved the creation of visual texts, these appeared to be designed to enhance reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, rather than to develop or enhance visual literacy. Kylie, for instance, described her 'drawing dictations' exercise:

I tell them something, they have to draw it . . . I add details to that, and they have to draw the things in the correct spaces. Usually it's when we do prepositions of place and stuff like that. The map of the streets...They have to put buildings on the map, or simple stuff like that...but we can't do it very often, because it's time consuming. It's not about drawing, it's about understanding and following the instruction (Kylie, Interview 4 – 6.04.2016).

Kylie's activity exemplifies the use of visual texts to establish connections between concepts and language features, grammar and spoken words. She saw value in allowing learners to exploit visual representation to demonstrate their listening skills. However, she added the caveat that this might not be something worth dedicating more time to. Allegra, Lili, Muriel and Julian reported similar approaches to encouraging their students to produce their own visual texts, while honing traditional literacy skills:

Sometimes they have to listen to a short story and then they have to draw what they understand, or sometimes there are vocabulary games, in which we practise or we introduce a set of words. And then, part of the game is to draw and to remember the game. So those

sort of activities . . . They find them entertaining and it changes their routine a little bit, so they are interested (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

Yesterday we just did vocabulary and then I asked them to draw . . . If we're doing new vocab and we're able to draw pictures, we draw them. It's just another vehicle to help them understand different vocab (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

They do have to do a research report where they have to create some charts...they do a questionnaire, and then they gather the data, and then they have to produce four data charts . . . And the mind mapping that we do, where they have to draw up a plan before they do a writing piece (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016).

There are assessment tasks where they draw graphs. Some of the learning outcomes specify that there has to be an image attached to the text, as [opposed to] to actually producing an image (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Allegra emphasised how engaging integrating drawing and listening can be, while helping students remember new vocabulary. Similarly, Lili reported using drawing to teach vocabulary, but combined this with reading. Muriel and Julian asked their students to use visual texts to summarise and present data, as well as to aid their writing process. These practices relate to the teachers' understanding of visual literacy as 'translating visual texts into written spoken words'. However, in these classroom activities, the process is the opposite – translating written or spoken words into visual texts. Notably, although such practices may assist learners in the development of visual literacy skills, this was not the educators' purpose. Therefore, they did not receive scaffolded instruction. This also appears to be the case in Georgie's approach to students producing visual texts:

I let them draw them [pictures]. I don't always enforce it, but we do work around how pictures can play a really important role. Our visual sense is our first and maybe dominant sense . . . Maybe the most common [task] would be for them making their own slides or using pictures as a talking point (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

Georgie advocates the importance of the visual sense in learning, but leaves production up to her students, unless the prescribed assessment task requires them to use visual texts.

Lola identified a significant flaw in a task prescribed in the curriculum employed by the English language centre where she works. This group assessment task required students to combine writing, oral and design skills. Her view was that, although it could present an opportunity for traditional literacy and visual literacy skills to be put into practice, this might not actually occur for all students:

For example, let's say the 'design and pitch of a product' group task that they have to do. We noticed an issue with the task throughout. They have to visually represent something [so] the ones that have the ability of drawing will turn off their English . . . The ones [students] that feel more confident speaking end up taking the role of putting together what they're going to say (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

Lola argued that despite her attempts to use pedagogic strategies that included all types of learners, she was concerned for those students who may focus on expressing their ideas visually – and hence develop visual literacy skills – at the expense of the improvement of other abilities, like speaking in front of an audience and writing a script for this presentation.

6.5.3 Response journals: Where the visual is an option

Three colleagues from an ELICOS institution – Jacob, Lola and Mercedes – discussed an assessment task that gave their students the option to respond to the content prescribed by their program syllabus and communicate their understanding of this through visual texts. This task consists of a reflective journal set in the advanced academic English courses (the fifth and sixth of six consecutive course levels). Learners are required to keep the journal during the 10-week academic term and submit it at the end. The task is graded and counts toward the overall score which determines whether a student will progress to their chosen university or vocational education program:

The learner is permitted to express their reflection on texts of all kinds in any way they like, so they can express themselves pictorially in the form of flow charts, bubble diagrams, pictures, cat drawings, anything that they find useful. This is not assessed on form; it's assessed purely on function, so there's no language errors, there's no vocabulary errors, and how the learner wants to keep their own journal is entirely free. I have marked journals that were getting excellent grades and there was not a sentence in the entire 10 weeks (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

It's just a place for them to be able to write what they think about the ideas . . . They don't have to summarise in words if they don't want to. They can – for example – draw, and a lot of students will . . . A lot of them like to do it in a visual way. It's amazing how talented so many of them are (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

They have to summarise two of the things that they read during class time and two of the things that they read from their external wider reading. I say to them “You can summarise the information in any way you want. You can write in paragraphs, or you could use a graphic organiser, or you could summarise in note points”. Some of them really like adding illustrations (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

These teachers were enthusiastic about their students creating visual texts: *‘I have marked journals [in which] the ideas were solid, and you could see the different reflection was good, and that the learning process was going on, so that all the boxes get ticks’* (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016). Notably, the students’ visual responses to this task were optional, hence those who were more inclined toward disciplines that involved visual production (e.g., design, architecture) benefited from the high scores that an impressive pictorial representation would gain them. This opportunity for students to explore the production of visual texts to express their ideas could potentially carry negative implications for some. The teachers suspected that those learners who had not achieved the written and spoken language proficiency to successfully complete the academic English course they were enrolled in, might rely on their visual literacy skills to get across the line (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016). The question here is whether this reflective journal task is designed to assess traditional literacy competencies such as reading or listening comprehension, or if this is a move toward acknowledging that communicating through visual texts is vital in today’s society (Bennett, 2011; Callow, 2011; de Silva Joyce, 2014; Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013; Matusiak et al., 2019; Victoria, 2018).

6.6 Teachers’ reading of students’ reactions to visual texts

This section draws on data categorised under the theme ‘How teachers ascertain students’ understanding of visual texts’. I explore the participants’ views on how their learners respond to visual texts in the adult English language classroom, with the purpose of exploring how such reactions influence their practices that incorporate visual texts. The data indicate that the participating teachers relied on two main elements in order to ascertain if their use of the chosen visual text had created the desired effect, whether this were – for instance – highlighting a specific grammar point, developing

oral skills or fostering positive classroom dynamics. The strategies to ascertain student comprehension that teachers outlined were: observation of social cues and scaffolded questioning.

6.6.1 Observing social cues

Social cues include facial expressions, gestures, body language, posture and vocal tone. Observing these serves several purposes in diverse social interactions and in many contexts (Gullberg, 2006; Sheth et al., 2011). For instance, they assist in understanding people's emotional states, which in the classroom context would include satisfaction, puzzlement, tension or relaxation (Kelly et al., 2008). Muriel, Winnifred, Lili and Jordan look for these cues to 'read' their students' responses to a visual text:

I think it's more the body language than anything else. Even if they don't communicate anything about it, I watch the groups (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016).

All their facial features. The 'Ah'...Immediately go 'Ah, yeah, yeah, yeah' sort of thing. . . You don't guess, but through their voice, through their reaction, through how quickly they respond to you (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

I think with beginner levels their faces are quite transparent. If they don't get it you can really see. They can be a really blank, sort of a searching look. If they get it there's usually some nodding . . . It's almost like once they guess what it is, it's almost 'oh yes that's it' (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

As teachers we're picking up lots and lots of nonverbal cues from our students. From their faces. We actually expect the student to have a particular expression of interest on their face, rather than a kind of an expression of neutrality (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

Students' facial expressions and reactions like nodding play an important role in the dynamics of these teachers' classrooms. These cues give them an indication of the effectiveness of a visual text, seemingly in relation to their intention when they choose to show it to their students. Positive responses and the conviction that the students have understood the message teachers intended to convey with a visual text may be interpreted – by both learner and educator – as a signal that it is now appropriate to continue to the next stages of a lesson.

6.6.2 Scaffolded questioning

Allegra, Jenny, Kylie and Anastasia reported a different approach. Rather than (or perhaps in addition to) relying on observing social cues in their students' reaction toward a visual text, these teachers said they customarily ask direct questions about its composition and content:

I ask a lot of questions about the pictures, like 'where are they?', 'what are these people doing?', 'what can you see in the picture?', so even if they provide very short answers, by asking questions I can assess if the picture is what we need or not (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

I might just ask what they could see in the picture. I might talk to them. I would ask a student if they don't get it. I want them to get it, so I try to assist them and coach them to understand what they see before them in the best way I can. I simplify (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

Only if they [the students] tell me what they see. I just ask them...Only that way, because they can nod, they can pretend to take notes, they can do whatever. Until they say it, I don't know [if they get it]. Or write it, if it's a writing class (Kylie, Interview 4 – 6.04.2016).

[In my students' case] they know the context is health care; that's a given. I take all the script off and I get them in groups to talk about 'What are they doing [in the picture]?' What's really interesting is up to when the feedback we get 'I think it's this. No, no, no, I think it's that' (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

Once again, these teachers' methodologies, although aided by visual cues, still show a bias towards the development of traditional literacy skills. For instance, Allegra explained that she often asks about locations, as well as actions performed by the characters in a picture, in order to elicit and/or teach new vocabulary for everyday life (e.g., at the supermarket, shopping) (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016). Meanwhile, Anastasia was more interested in her nursing students' recognition of various nurse-patient scenarios, which in turn, helped her drill certain health-related terms like 'check blood pressure' and 'point where it hurts' (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

Other participants – Jacob, Georgie, Julian, Mercedes and Hermione – stated that they not only ask about what can be seen in a visual text, but also elicit information from their students to determine whether a visual text 'works' for their teaching purposes. They said they do this in different ways. Where some checked on the learner's understanding of concepts and ideas, others preferred to guide

them by posing 'leading' questions. For instance, Jacob and Georgie said that they ask concept checking questions to obtain feedback specific to their objectives for a particular lesson:

Well, to be honest sometimes they don't always get it, very often they don't . . . How I know if they [the students] have really understood [an image] is when I get the feedback that I expect . . . I think concept checking questions are massively important . . . I would tend to use traditional methods: investigation and elicitation to ascertain as to whether the learner has actually engaged with the image (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

I don't think you always do ['get' an image], so I think that's why you use maybe concept-checking questions. It depends what the role of the image is, to get the students to engage more with the written material, whether it's to understand it, to give them something else to grasp onto, to help them interpret the meaning of something, or whether it's to add another layer to that meaning that you were discussing...I would say maybe not all of them get it probably (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

Jacob and Georgie's approach suggests that their choice of visual texts is validated by student feedback and how relevant this feedback is to the objectives of the lesson. This also seems to be the case in Julian's classroom:

I do a lot of questioning . . . I think you might find this with a lot of trainers, particularly CELTA trainers, this idea of the closed question, the concept question, where you'll pose a question and it's almost like a lawyer's leading question, because you're posing it to get a certain answer that you want. Say for instance, the image of 'the Lovers at the Bastille', the first question might be "What period do you think this is? Do you think it's modern or do you think it's an old photo?" It's an old photo. "Where do you think it is?" After a while, somebody will spot a dim outline of the Eiffel Tower. "Paris!" "Yeah, well done. Okay. What time of year do you think it is?" Questions like that. You know where you're going. It's leading them along the guiding path (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Here, Julian illustrated how, with scaffolding, he helps the students work out the answers he deems correct, relevant or appropriate, because they contribute to lesson outcomes, such as learning a language feature, practising a skill or locking in new content. Hermione also reported employing this

'leading' approach to help learners make meaning from a visual text, and expressed a stronger view on what influences the learner's interpretations:

Well, you ask them questions, listen to their discussion and sometimes you realise they haven't understood it at all...so then you go back and say, 'What about?' or 'Did you think?'. Particularly when you're coming from a different language and culture background and education level – that was one thing I learned very quickly – is really important to scaffold from abstraction to concrete. The more educated you are, the more you have a concrete educated view. So, I find, depending on education level, probably the biggest impact actually in interpreting pictures is not culture and language background . . . If you're educated from Vietnam and I'm educated from Australia, we'll often not see the same thing, whereas if you're educated from Australia, you might see the same as me (Hermione, Interview 15 – 26.05.2016).

Hermione appeared to hold her views as the 'correct ones', or at least, as the most relevant to the lesson's outcomes. She observes prior education as the determinant of whether her students would decode a visual text in the same way she does, and sees this as a reason to guide learners toward the 'correct' interpretation. In contrast to this belief, Lola challenges the notion of there being right or wrong ways to understand a visual text:

I might be reading too deep and too philosophically into that [but], is there a way to understand an image though? I don't know, it's really...It's hard for me. Images are so easily interpreted in different ways by different people . . . It's not for us to agree on anything. It's just for getting the language out . . . Just to create the actual discussion involved (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

Lola questioned whether there is a unique way in which a visual text can be 'read'. Whereas other participants used visual texts with fixed pedagogic purposes, and adopted different strategies to ensure their students 'got' the message, Lola acknowledged the subjectivity of visual text interpretation (Hall, 2013). Her perspective seemed to allow for the different backgrounds and worldviews of her students to inform their understanding, and her main purpose was to spark conversation, rather than to impart a specific language feature, such as a grammar point or vocabulary item.

6.7 Summary

In Chapter 6, I examined the participating teachers' self-reported practices with visual texts in their classrooms. The views presented in this chapter situated visual literacy as a very important matter for adult English language teachers, who explained how they incorporated visual texts in their lessons, based on a number of factors. The participants' perspectives on the role visual texts play in adult ELT focused on how these can support traditional literacy skills and be used as introductory to written or spoken texts. In terms of the criteria they considered in order to select a visual text to incorporate in a lesson, these included: sensitivity to the diverse cultural backgrounds of their learners, the relevance a particular still or moving image may have to the learners' needs and the teachers' pedagogical purposes, and how accessible these texts are to an adult English language learner in relation to their meaning-making abilities.

Analysis of the focus group data illustrated the participants' contrasting processes in their classroom use of visual representations, providing insight into how these educators interpreted and used different theme-specific visual texts. These insights – both supported and challenged ideas expressed during the interviews. The data also suggested that while students in ELICOS and Government-funded programs may be exposed to many forms of visual texts, they have little or no opportunity to produce visual texts. Furthermore, participating teachers' strategies to interpret their students' reactions to visual texts, were explored. These included their attention to social cues, such as their students' gestures and body language, and techniques such as direct questioning and prompting.

7 FINDINGS PART III: WHAT SHAPES UNDERSTANDINGS AND PRACTICES IN RELATION TO VISUAL LITERACY?

In Chapters 5 and 6 I explored the ways in which the participating teachers articulated their understandings of visual literacy in the adult ELT context, and how they described their practices which include the use of visual texts in the classroom. In Chapter 7, I investigate what informs their understanding of visual literacy and how these influencing factors are manifest in the classroom. The three broad areas of analysis identified draw on the themes ‘visual literacy is not overtly addressed in preparation programs for adult English language teachers’, ‘in teachers’ education and professional development visual texts support traditional skills’ and ‘visual literacy and access to/proficiency with digital technologies intersect in adult ELT’.

7.1 Visual literacy in adult English language teachers’ education

Informed by research which identifies teacher formal education and pre- and in-service training as defining elements in shaping educators’ pedagogies (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Borg, 2006; Richards, 2015; Walkington, 2005), I asked the 15 participants if and how their teacher education and professional development activities addressed the concept of visual literacy. I also inquired whether the different teaching courses they undertook provided specific instruction on using visual texts in adult ELT. By delving into their educational experiences, I sought to identify the extent to which understanding visual literacy informed their repertoire of teaching strategies and methods in their adult English language classrooms. The data revealed that although half of the participants admitted their education had not explicitly addressed visual literacy, the majority had received formal and/or informal instruction on how using visual texts could assist them in enhancing the development of traditional literacy skills in their students. Only one participant reported explicit and purposeful discussion about visual literacy in her teacher education.

7.1.1 A gap in the teachers’ instruction: ‘Never heard of visual literacy before’

The interview data revealed considerable variation in the participants’ pre-service teacher education. Eleven teachers held postgraduate degrees in either linguistics or TESOL, while four had completed shorter ELT courses, such as the four week CELTA course (Cambridge Assessment English, 2017). Nevertheless, regardless of the different courses that led them to become adult English language teachers, they reported not receiving explicit instruction on visual literacy. Visual literacy in ELT did

not resonate with eight of the teachers. One participant even admitted '*I don't think I had ever heard of that [visual literacy] until I met you*' (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016). Below, five more participants share their experiences:

I don't think there have been any parts of my training that talked about it [visual literacy] (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

No. I don't remember in my graduate diploma of education...I don't remember anything visual being emphasised at all (Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

I don't remember discussing that topic [visual literacy] at all (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

It [visual literacy] was probably a neglected area in both my bachelor and the units that I did in applied linguistics (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

To be honest, I think my experience as a student is as important as my experience as a teacher . . . Visual literacy is something I've not been exposed to, and could be because I've never been taught that or have never had that used in my own learning in the past (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

In these statements, Mercedes, Jordan, Allegra, Anastasia and Winnifred reported a complete absence of visual literacy as an explicit topic of discussion in their teacher education. Experiences with in-service professional development activities did not address visual literacy either. For instance, Lola, Lili and Muriel declared they had attended professional development in which visual literacy never received any attention:

It [visual literacy] was never the focus in PD sessions (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

I don't know if there's anything about visual literacy in our PDs, really (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

I've never learned anything [about visual literacy] in PD . . . I'm getting some ideas from colleagues . . . Definitely no PDs that I can remember as being explicitly about visual literacy (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016).

Only one teacher mentioned visual literacy being part of her education. Georgie recalled a subject she studied at university directly related to interpreting visual texts:

There was a subject called 'Politics of the Image' that was all about semiotics of photographs, that's in news media, and studied art history, that sort of thing. There was lots of symbols and that kind of stuff (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

Georgie commented that she believed that studying this subject had made her think about the complex relationship between a visual text and its intended audience. She said that this awareness was essential when teaching students who come from diverse backgrounds, arguing that this relationship '*can be broken*' when teachers use visual texts with a specific meaning in mind, but learners interpret them in different ways (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016). The knowledge acquired through taking this university subject may have also influenced her views on how in her language teaching she strives to promote specific agendas, such as foregrounding gender equality and using visual texts that showcase women in roles of power (as seen in Section 6.3.1).

Julian also reported having some training which addressed the role of visual texts in language education, although in his view, this professional development session was not explicitly about visual literacy. Instead, it looked at the relationship between understanding a visual text and the cultural context in which this is viewed:

Not in terms of visual literacy. The only PD that comes close to it is a cultural session I went to years ago. That was really a slightly different angle, which was to deal with the way that we deal with culture in the language. It was about the way that images are used to project a certain type of cultural expectation and the way that they're context-dependent, and the way that they're embedded in culture, and you need to be able to realise that before you start to use them in the classroom (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Julian did not regard this professional development experience as specifically targeting visual literacy, yet, it seems to have provided him with an opportunity to look at it as the ability to interpret a visual

text considering the context, and to have encouraged him to take this construct into account when using visual texts as aids in his own classroom.

7.1.2 Focus on supporting oral and written language, not on visual literacy

The examples offered by the participants regarding their formal education and in-service professional development activities demonstrated that these had to do with the use of visual texts in relation to traditional literacy skills in the English language classroom – not with instruction or development of visual literacy. The teachers indicated that they learnt more about how to support reading, writing and speaking with visual texts, than about what visual literacy was or how they could assist adult English language learners develop it:

It was all about written language . . . The visuals were there to support the listening, speaking, reading and writing or to elicit listening, speaking, reading and writing (Hermione, Interview 15 – 26.05.2016).

I think going back to my CELTA, it's the only time where they said "visual things are your friend in the classroom . . . If you're especially teaching vocabulary if it's something that can be represented visually do it in that way" (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

I can actually remember a specific lesson, input session, where the trainer used two pictures of the streets in the city where I studied at . . . She had a picture from a present day and a picture from maybe say 50, 60 years ago, and she used the 2 pictures to contrast the difference. The language point that she was using as an exemplification was 'used to'. She used that as an example lesson of how to use images to begin a grammar lesson (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

We did have one woman who came in . . . she was fantastic at using images. I use a lot of what she taught in terms of using images as a way of introducing something, reinforcing something, supporting your learning (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

Here, Hermione, Lola, Jacob and Lili share experiences about their teacher education in which visual texts are at the forefront of teaching language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and features such as grammar and vocabulary. These examples elucidate the view that visual texts assist processes such as learning new words or identifying a particular sentence structure. Winnifred and

Allegra also shared experiences about in-service professional development opportunities that seem to have inspired them to use visual texts, but which also favoured traditional literacy skills over developing visual literacy:

This was a PD given by a visual artist . . . She was explaining how having that book of just pictures with no words and telling a story of something was better in getting her students to open up and to come up with words . . . [Also] there's this lady, she was showing us a lot of videos. She draws these beautiful colour images that she turns into a video story. It was more targeted to primary and secondary school students . . . If there are such materials around that are relevant to adults, I think that could be used as well (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

They [her supervisors at work] invited a person who has trained in a pronunciation workshop and she explained how to explain the physicality of pronunciation through visuals but the main purpose of the workshop was not visuals. She introduced a little bit how to get students to understand, you know, how phonetics work through visuals (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

Winnifred and Allegra may have learned innovative teaching methodologies in these instances. However, these professional development sessions in which visual texts were essential did not have visual literacy development as their explicit purpose. Instead, visual texts were used to elicit oral language and to improve pronunciation.

Lourdes and Allegra expressed their concern for how the lack of explicit discourse on visual literacy in teacher education may impact ELT in today's context:

I would say that we covered the use of images for setting the context, for example, and they [her instructors] would use images for vocabulary . . . It was about using images to support your English language teaching, but not visual literacy and such. I think there was definitely a big gap there, I don't know if there is now. I think all of that ties in with visual literacy . . . Because I was working with students with low literacy at the time, we were using a lot of images in the classroom, [but] it didn't come from our university training (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

Actually, while doing my education degree they [her lecturers] introduced activities that are good for ESL students, but it was more related to materials and flashcards and those types of things, but not actually proper visual literacy training. For example what sorts of games or activities you could do with flashcards, some websites that have images if you want to use them, but nothing further. It was not a 'how to use visuals' class per se. There's no training in that sense. You have to find your own resources, do your own research, and find your own activities as you go. There's no proper training. So I think there's a gap there (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

Lourdes and Allegra identified the lack of discussion on the topic of visual literacy as a gap in their teacher education. Their view on the need for explicit training for ELT practitioners is supported by Avgerinou and Pettersson (2011), who argue that while the use of visual literacy may improve learning, visual language must be learnt and therefore, overtly taught.

The data in this section has shown how the participants' educational experiences and personal interests influenced their perceptions of visual literacy. Overall, the message they seemed to have received from their lecturers, instructors and colleagues, was that the use of visual texts is beneficial to enhance the development of traditional literacy skills. In the following section, I explore data which revealed that, in addition to their formal education and professional development opportunities, the participating teachers' perceptions about their own dispositions for exploring and using visual texts also affected their teaching practices.

7.2 Teachers' disposition for using visual texts in their pedagogies

Dispositions in the context of education are understood as 'an individual's tendencies to act in a particular manner. As such, they are predictive of patterns of action' (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007, p. 361). A teacher's disposition is influenced by their beliefs, interests, attitudes and opinions (Dottin, 2009; Vannatta & Fordham, 2004). As a case in point, in the study, some participants demonstrated affinity for sourcing and using photos, videos and websites for teaching purposes, and believed they knew how to effectively do so, whereas others found this was not their strength. Accordingly, while some teachers chose to incorporate visual texts into their practices thinking this would enable their students to navigate the English language learning environment and improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, others hesitated. For instance, Muriel indicated that using visual texts empowered her to engage her students by building on knowledge they already possessed:

With adult English, they've already got these preconceived concepts and ideas. That's really easy to teach towards . . . If you use imagery, you'll be able to explore what they know a lot more, in a broader sense . . . I just think it opens up a lot more doors. It gives you a lot more flexibility as a teacher, and gets more out of the student (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016).

Muriel sees visual texts as more than mere instruments to complement or enhance reading and writing skills. Instead, she finds value in using visual texts to understand her students' existing perspectives of the world, and potentially leverage this to better assist them in critically engaging with what they see. Similarly, Jacob equated visual literacy with '*literacy in a modern world*', and argued that as a teacher, it was his job to help his students engage critically with visual texts, as this enables them to understand the context in which language exists and how this relates to their existing ideas (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

Muriel and Jenny shared how their affinity with the arts informed their use of visual texts:

Personally, I really love images, because I draw and paint. But I think that teachers might find it quite threatening to teach something like imagery and so on regarding literacy, because unless they're quite creative, they might actually think 'I don't quite know how to teach this'. Reading and writing is quite explicit, where it's pretty much rules: First, you need to know the grammar, and they need to understand pronunciation of a particular word, and that kind of thing. So, I think the visual is a bit threatening for some teachers perhaps, and others might find it as a waste of time, because they might assume it's more like arty, creative area rather than being something intellectual. (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016).

I've been using visuals in my classes because I'm a visual person. I like to do it anyway. I've been a visual artist. I'm constantly looking at images anyway and working out how they could be useful in the classroom (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

In contrast to Muriel and Jenny, who saw themselves as proficient visual text users, Jordan indicated that, despite her expressed views about how powerful visual texts can be in language teaching (explored earlier), she thought that incorporating them in classroom practices may sometimes be more suited to teachers with a natural disposition for sourcing them easily, which was not her case:

Goodness! I'm not very good at searching for images! I'm not very good at finding them quickly
(Jordan, Interview 8 – 26.04.2016).

The data indicate that curiosity and interest for the visual and for how to take advantage of the use of visual texts in pedagogic practices are subject to these teachers' affinities, personal preferences and thus, their attitudes. Here, affect (Callow, 2005; Cole, 2012; Deleuze, 1995) plays an important role. Since Jenny and Muriel saw themselves as artistic people, they allowed this favourable self-perception as proficient users of visual language to guide how they interacted with visual texts, their responses to them, their aesthetic appreciation, and their creative choices in both the viewing and production of visual objects (Callow, 2005). As a result, they felt confident using visual texts in their language teaching. In contrast, Jordan foregrounded her self-proclaimed deficient skills in sourcing visual texts. Even Lourdes, who had earlier advocated the importance of being visually literate in everyday life, admitted: *'I'm really bad, I spend hours on the internet finding images in which I think the message is clear, it's simple, it's not overcrowded'* (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016). Notably, Jordan and Lourdes reported still using visual texts in their pedagogies, despite their self-perceived limitations.

7.3 Intersections between visual literacy and using digital technologies in the classroom

Drawing on data categorised under the theme 'visual literacy and proficiency with digital technologies intersect in adult ELT', this section explores links between the participating teachers' perspectives on visual literacy and their use of different technologies present in their teaching context. For instance, Jacob – a teacher who regularly employed various digital technologies – said:

I think that we have to redefine these [visual literacy] skills for a modern age, especially because today we are viewing text a lot more often. The difference between a piece of paper in front of me, and a text represented on an electronic device for example, would be 'reading' and 'viewing', in my mind (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016).

Jacob suggests that technology facilitates visual literacy and that viewing is dependent on the media through which this activity takes place. He argues that people 'read' printed texts (i.e., in books, newspapers, magazines) but 'view' texts displayed on electronic devices, such as a computer screen, an iPad or mobile phone. Notably, he did not make explicit reference to viewing visual printed texts in his comments. The distinction he made between reading and viewing seemed to be purely based on

the medium through which his students access information, not whether this information is written-based or visual. Jacob shared that his thinking about the difference between reading and viewing was inspired by how much he valued watching his 'digital native' students (Brumberger, 2011; Prensky, 2001) (a term he used) employ electronic devices in the classroom to assist their own English language learning, and outside to communicate with friends and family (Jacob, Interview 3 – 6.04.2016). The term digital native is often used as characteristic of the 'millennial generation' (Brumberger, 2011; Carlson, 2008) of people born roughly between the mid-1980s and late 1990s, to connote their privileged access to digital technologies. In the Western world, people belonging to this generational cohort are perceived to have grown up with a host of digital technologies at their fingertips in and out of the classroom (Villamizar & Mejía, 2019).

Another teacher – Georgie – seemed to associate visual literacy with the ability to navigate digital technologies in order to communicate (e.g., via email or text message) and to access information (e.g., using online search engines):

It [visual literacy] would maybe most commonly come into play when there's any multi-modal or multimedia kind of materials that we're working with, anything audio-visual, anything in a reading text that isn't a word, so pictures, or maybe even different sizes of fonts and things like that, graphs, tables . . . something like Quizlet (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

Georgie did make distinctions between the types and formats of information that can be accessed electronically. She highlighted connections between visual literacy and accessing and understanding multimodal texts through online technologies with explicit examples. 'Quizlet', the resource she mentions is an online learning tool which claims to help train students via flashcards and a variety of games and quizzes (Ed Tech Digest, 2019). She also shared that she '*always has Power Point slides*' to illustrate what she is teaching to her class (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016). Jacob's and Georgie's views indicate a positive view toward using various digital technologies in the classroom. Their perspectives may also suggest their assumption that visual literacy, multimodality and digital technologies inherently go hand in hand.

Other teachers, including Lola and Lili, expressed negative views toward sourcing visual texts to incorporate in their teaching, due to their inadequate ability when using technology, which caused apprehension:

I think I'm a bit of a technophobe in some ways. I know there's a lot of valuable tools out there that I am a bit resistant to. I personally don't have a Facebook or a Twitter account. I don't really know how to tell students they can use it for themselves. It's the direction that things are going and I think my resistance to it...I'll probably need to be a little bit more flexible because I'm sure there's many ways they can use that stuff [social media] to improve their English (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

I know what my weakness is . . . Definitely technology in the classroom. I think I probably use a lot of very more primary school techniques and so I use less technology . . . I have a responsibility to make sure they're more tech savvy but that would definitely be my weakness. Something that I think about and I think I need someone to show me what to do. If I know what to do I'll do it (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

Earlier, Lola and Lili argued in favour of the importance of visual literacy, and saw great value in using visual texts in their pedagogies. However, their limited abilities with digital technologies seemed to deter them from using these to access visual resources. These views are linked to the discussed notion of teachers' disposition toward a particular practice. The issue here is that their ideas of 'phobias' and 'weaknesses' as teachers – which, according to Deleuze (1995) are elements of affect – could have negatively impact how their students perceive the use of digital technologies themselves. Cole (2012) argues that the passion (or lack thereof) with which an educator approaches a subject matter permeates through to their learners. Lola's statement is a case in point: if she is afraid of using a widespread communication medium such as Facebook, she might not possess the confidence to advise a student on how to use it to improve their English literacy or visual literacy skills.

Hand in hand with the teachers' apprehension toward engaging with visual texts via digital technologies was their actual access to such technologies in their workplaces. Lourdes, Winnifred and Lili – all colleagues in a Government-funded adult English language program provider – shared their negative experiences:

One of the reasons I'm not using computers at the moment is basically because of the sites [teaching venues] that I'm using. We have an IT support person once every three weeks if we're lucky, and the computers generally don't work . . . It's actually the lack of resources. In one of the rooms that I run, I can't really. It's a shared room in a community centre that we go into. There's no PowerPoint, there's no screen . . . There are a lot of things that I've done in the past

and that I think are really good practice, but to be honest, I'm not doing them because I don't have the resources (Lourdes, Interview 10 – 4.05.2016).

No smart boards, no fancy projectors and things like that, so we make do with what we have. Even if we have some of that technology, the internet might not be reliable enough for it. It's not like we have it at the tips of our fingers. I am still very much blackboard, a marker pen and some handouts (Winnifred, Interview 6 – 12.04.2016).

I guess my students don't have computers and they're not very computer literate, which is, as I said, a reason I should be doing more of it. We don't have computers in the classroom (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016).

Inadequate availability of resources and the frustration that this problem causes have led Lourdes, Winnifred and Lili to hold on to traditional printed visual materials they know work. For instance, Lili said that she prefers to *'print pictures from the internet, enlarge and laminate them, so they can be passed around by the students in class over and over'* (Lili, Interview 7 – 14.04.2016). Meanwhile, Georgie and Jacob – who saw visual literacy as intrinsically connected to the use of digital technologies – can readily access computers and projectors in any classroom of the modern English language centre for overseas students where they work. Lola – their colleague – confirms: *'Now you can Google something, you project it and we move on'* (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016). The following ELICOS teachers' statements strengthen this point:

The most fun thing is projecting it [an image] on the wall because you get a big full colour picture (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016)

We do a lot of YouTube teaching, and I often set them on YouTube on a given topic for homework, to do note-taking and listening. Obviously, there's a lot of visual imagery in those (Anastasia, Interview 11 – 10.05.2016).

Another way I've also used it [visual literacy] is when you hit something and you can't explain it, or it would take a lot of language, then I'd get on the computer, pull it up on the DVP (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

YouTube is a very valuable tool. [For example] we have two weeks about health in the advanced level. I was finding students just didn't know how a contagion could be passed around. It was very easy...There was a video that we found . . . It was actually just the image that gave them the language that they couldn't hear (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

The data suggest that socio-economic differences between students of ELICOS and Government-funded English language programs for migrants and refugees – mentioned earlier by Julian – coexist with the contrasting levels of resources of the educational institutions in which such programs are taught. However, regardless of the varying levels of access to digital technologies the participants had at their workplaces, and despite some unfavourable views on their own abilities to engage with technologies to facilitate their selection and use of visual texts, the majority of teachers reported employing a range of technologies in their classrooms to introduce learners to experiences they might encounter at university or at work. For instance, Lola, Mercedes, Georgie and Julian described how their learners engaged with various software-based resources:

Definitely when they [the students] present – especially in the higher levels – they're frequently using PowerPoint or Prezi. They without fail include Google images that have to do with their topic (Lola, Interview 9 – 27.04.2016).

When they make little short two-minute presentations, I encourage them to use PowerPoint images . . . We talk a little bit about what's easier to read for readability, what looks professional, and what doesn't look professional. If you're in an academic setting, don't have pictures of puppy dogs, for example (Mercedes, Interview 5 – 11.04.2016).

[I use] educational technology programs like Kahoot. Things like surveys, and they collect live data . . . You can have something on the board and you get students to draw their picture interpretation of it and it automatically sends, and you can project it on the white board (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016).

What I have them do, most of the time, is show and tell activities, especially with modern phones that have got cameras and store lots and lots of photos. A relatively recent lesson was showing a photo of either a familiar or a particular scene or something, and explaining it to the other people, what was happening in the photo when you took it . . . Got them to find images that they could then show each other (Julian, Interview 13 – 25.05.2016).

Lola, Mercedes, Georgie and Julian associated expressing ideas through visual texts with using digital technologies to complement language skills. These skills included putting together Power-Point presentations, searching in Google images or interacting online. These conceptions may place too much attention on the technical aspects involved in an assessment task. Furthermore, they may be pushing the idea that because the majority of the overseas students completing such technology-based tasks belong to the millennial generation (Brumberger, 2011; Carlson, 2008), they have arrived at the adult English language classroom with a certain level of proficiency with computers, online search engines and mobile applications (Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013; Mills, 2010; Prensky, 2001). In contrast, when discussing how the use of visual texts helped her in her teaching, Allegra said that she was aware of her adult (often senior) migrant students' limited experiences with and access to digital technologies (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016); thus, she needed to help them navigate these resources in the classroom:

We teach them how to use Microsoft Word. Basic tasks, typing, and sometimes how to insert a picture and things like that (Allegra, Interview 1 – 30.03.2016).

Jenny also made reference to simple tasks in which she uses digital technologies to help her students incorporate visual texts in their learning:

I just get them to find an image on the internet and bring it across because visual literacy is developing a computer skill where they have to go to the internet, they have to source, they have to learn to copy and paste and so on . . . This is not always dictated by the curriculum. It can be depending if that's one of the competencies we have to do. I do it all the time because I think it's fun and I think it helps them with their skills (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016).

Here, Jenny explicitly equates visual literacy with developing computer skills. Her view of visual literacy seems to intersect with her ideas on proficiency with digital technologies, which may empower her learners to access and share information from the internet. Allegra's and Jenny's efforts were directed to students learning how to use digital technologies to include visual texts in their written work. In principle, they focus on – like their ELICOS counterparts – their students' development of technical skills, rather than on how they express their ideas, viewpoints and experiences through visual texts, or interpret the visual texts of others.

7.4 Summary

The data analysed in this chapter suggest that the participants' understanding of visual literacy and the related classroom practices they reported, were informed by a number of internal and external factors. To begin with, visual literacy did not seem to be explicitly included in the pre-service education programs and in-service professional development activities the participating teachers had undertaken. Where the topic of pedagogies that included the use of visual texts was addressed, it was clear that the ultimate goal was to support verbal and written literacy learning, not the development of visual literacy. The data also indicated that the study participants' personal disposition for working with visual texts also contrasted markedly, ranging from confidence to apprehension. These perspectives, together with the access these educators had to workplace resources and technologies in the classroom, influenced their decisions to incorporate visual texts in their adult ELT practices. Finally, the discussion addressed the blurred line between proficiency with digital technologies and visual literacy in the participating teachers' views.

8 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I explicate the findings presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, in relation to the empirical research and theory explored in the literature review. My aim is to articulate how this research extends current knowledge of visual literacy specifically within the adult ELT field in Australia. The ideas that emerge in this discussion originate from the views of 15 adult English language teachers of overseas students and immigrants across five educational institutions in Melbourne, Australia. An analysis of their responses in individual interviews and focus groups has enabled me to identify a number of issues which highlight the complexity and challenges of understanding the role of visual literacy in adult ELT.

Below, I present a synopsis of the key findings in relation to the three research questions. In the sections that follow, I explore in detail the issues that emerged in the interview and focus group data, building on the existing literature in the field. To synthesise and elaborate on the meaning and significance of the findings, I adopted a method suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008). Their 'interpretation outline tool' (p. 129) facilitates examining underlying meanings by prompting the researcher to answer 'why and why not?' questions around each finding, and to consider probable reasons that might provide further explanation. By asking these questions, I aimed to examine the key findings emerging from the analysis of the data, and to construct a holistic picture of the participants' views on the concepts examined in the study. The discussion is supported by links to literature on literacy and visual literacy, as well as on teacher education and beliefs, and the identified connections between these and my arguments.

As will be recalled, the three research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do adult English language teachers conceptualise visual literacy?
2. How do adult English language teachers describe their classroom practices in relation to the use of visual texts?
3. What shapes adult English language teachers' understanding of visual literacy and their use of visual texts in their classroom practices?

8.1 Addressing the research questions: Key findings

With regard to the first question, the majority of the participating adult English language teachers referred to visual literacy as the ability to make meaning out of visual texts in order to acquire information and develop oral and written language. Within this overarching view, their perspectives

emphasised three key processes: 'reading and decoding images', 'translating images into words', and 'understanding the world'. In their responses, the teachers included constructs originating from two different standpoints: first, they based their perspectives on their own 'everyday' experiences as individuals who observe visual texts (e.g., still images, videos, emoji); and second, they expressed their views on visual literacy in relation to their use of visual texts as educators. The range of visual texts described aligned in part with socio-cultural views of literacy, which explore literacy events in and outside the classroom (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1999; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993). Standing out – and apart – two participants described visual literacy as a reciprocal process in which people can interpret a visual text and communicate visually, rather than in words.

Addressing the second research question, the study found that in the self-reported accounts of their classroom practices, all the participants foregrounded the predominant view that the purpose of 'using images' is to support the literacy skills generally seen as the core areas of language learning – namely reading, writing, listening and speaking (Harmer, 2013). Consistently, the teachers' examples of their use of visual texts in the classroom did not appear to be guided by the objective of helping these learners develop visual literacy skills. Rather, they seemed informed by the pervasiveness of a competence-based approach to language learning (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017). The concern language educators showed for their students 'being able' to read and write – with the help of visual texts in this case – relates to an issue highlighted by Green (1988, 2012b) when he proposed and revised the 3D model of literacy. He argued that when it came to learning something complex like language or technologies, emphasis tends to be given to the operational dimension of literacy, that is, the mechanics of 'how things work'.

The findings indicated that visual literacy was seen as important by the participating language teachers of adult overseas students and immigrants, albeit to varying degrees. Ten participants used a range of adjectives from 'essential' and 'massive' to 'highly important' and 'pretty up there', to describe how they rated the importance of visual literacy in the context of adult ELT. Two participants considered it important but not indispensable in their classroom practices, and two viewed it also as important, but noted that from their points of view, visual literacy depends on the context of and purpose for which visual texts are used. The teachers' self-reported classroom activities using visual texts seemed to focus on enhancing written and oral language production or efficiently using digital technologies, rather than on the overt teaching of visual literacy. In other words, despite the participants' affirmative responses about their use of visual texts in their classrooms, they were not explicit as to how such practices facilitate the development of their learners' visual literacy competencies. The

teachers described 'how' they used visual texts and in what circumstances, and not how these practices might relate to their students' critical analysis of visual texts or their development of visual literacy, thus revealing a strong focus on the operational dimension of literacy proposed by Green (1988, 2012b).

In relation to the third research question, which explored what influences the participants' conceptualisations of visual literacy, and thus the practices they reported, it appears that these are shaped by features characteristic of the adult ELT field, alongside earlier training or on-going professional development. Such features include institutional context restrictions and the teachers' perceptions of the needs different student cohorts may have. More specifically, the majority of the participating teachers discussed the contrasting levels of resources they could use to incorporate visual texts in their classrooms, as well as the needs of students with varying existing levels of literacy. Three participants among those who teach migrants/refugees were particularly emphatic on the constraints imposed by their students' low level of English, that is, in relation to how these learners could engage with visual texts. Related to how the teachers' own educational and professional experiences may or may not support them incorporating visual literacy in their lessons, their responses indicated that, as de Silva Joyce (2014) claims, English language programs for adults in Australia do not provide streamlined guidance for teachers on how to either overtly teach visual literacy or embed activities promoting visual literacy in their language classrooms.

8.2 Adult English language teachers' understandings of visual literacy

The study found that although the participants associated visual literacy with actions such as 'reading', 'decoding' and 'interpreting' 'images', and thought of it as important in their adult ELT practice, they seemed to possess limited understandings of what visual literacy actually involves. Notably, none of the teachers articulated *how* the processes of reading, decoding, interpreting and critiquing visual texts occur, how they might teach visual literacy, or how their English language learners can develop visual literacy skills (e.g., through overt instruction or embedded in the language teaching curriculum) (Bowen, 2017; Serafini, 2017; Takaya, 2016). This finding signals a challenge for adult English language teachers: without a clear and solid grounding in the theory of visual literacy and practical experience, they are constrained in the ways they can support their adult English language learners' development of visual literacy. Lack of understanding in this area can lead to inadequate practical applications in the adult ELT classroom.

Through the lens of Green's (2012b) three dimensions of literacy – operational, cultural and critical – it seems that how the participating teachers conceptualised visual literacy is strongly linked to the operational dimension. This approach was evident in the responses of half of the participants on their teaching; they exemplified visual literacy practices as using drawings, diagrams, mind maps or graphs in their classrooms. They seemed to understand the practices of using visual texts in their English language lessons as engaging with visual literacy, when in reality visual texts were merely employed as 'visual aids'. Four teachers brought up the use of digital technologies in their classrooms as examples of visual literacy skills. For instance, they saw their learners' proficient use of Power-Point in their oral presentations or their interaction with digital resources (e.g., mobile applications) as indicators of visual literacy. Again, the teachers' perceptions of how well their learners used technology to engage with visual texts to support writing or speaking, seemed interchangeable with their understandings of visual literacy.

The ways in which the study participants articulated visual literacy included discourse dominant in the ELT profession, which is driven by traditional views of literacy (Barton, 2007; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Street, 2009b). Seeing visual literacy as complementary to traditional literacy skills substantiates the view that the adult ELT field in Australia continues to focus on pedagogical strategies – including the use of visual texts – that can improve the development of reading and writing skills (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007; Carey & Robertson, 2015). This explains why when describing in what ways they embedded visual texts in the adult English language classroom, most of the participants in the study were more interested in how their students responded to these stimuli through oral or written language modes, than in the specific process involved in how their students could 'read' a still or moving image.

The participating teachers' understandings of visual literacy were aligned with the goal of engaging in literacy events, such as examining visual texts with the purpose of meaning making. Thus, these views were linked to principles of Literacy Studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009; Gee, 1999; Heath, 1983; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993). Furthermore, the teachers' consideration of how technologies can facilitate visual literacy incorporated the notion of Multiliteracies (Anstey & Bull, 2018; Iyer & Luke, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 2014; The New London Group, 1996) as a pedagogy encompassing various modes of representation. Nevertheless, the participants' prevalent idea of visual texts as supportive to understanding written texts, confines visual literacy and visual texts to a subordinate place within the curriculum and their teaching practices.

Notably, only two of the 15 participating teachers considered visual literacy as a reciprocal communication process through visual texts, that is, one involving not by only decoding visual texts but also creating them. In the context of this study, a view of visual literacy as a reciprocal communication process sees the adult English language learner as able to decode visual information and encode new visual information. This is a different process to what happens when someone ‘reads’ a visual text and produces a written or spoken response. This understanding of reciprocal visually based communication suggests a more complex view, where the ultimate aim of engaging with visual texts is not exclusively to help the development of written and spoken language. The fact that only two of the study participants touched on this idea of communication through the production of visual texts revealed a key issue: merely labelling visual literacy with a number of actions without comprehensive explanations of what these entail, misconstrues visual literacy as simply ‘doing something’ with visual texts, which, in turn, places visual literacy in a subservient position in relation to traditional understandings of literacy.

8.3 Elaborating visual literacy in teachers’ pedagogies: Talking *about* visual texts, not *with* visual texts

When reflecting on what role visual literacy plays in adult ELT, all of the study participants shared how in their teaching they employed different types of visual texts (e.g., still images, videos, mobile applications, and interactive online games). The majority of the teachers described their adult ELT classroom practices as incorporating visual texts as important sources of information and a vital component of learning a language. Nevertheless, despite expressing how significant they thought using visual texts was in their pedagogies, they referred to them primarily as supportive devices for reading or listening comprehension, and for the development of writing and speaking skills. Furthermore, it seemed as though the participants assumed that since pictures, videos, websites and many other visual texts are easy to locate, these could be selected and used as aids in any English language lesson, as long as the visual texts fitted within their planned lesson outcomes and fulfilled their criteria for selection (i.e., non-offensive, clear, literal, easy to understand).

The study participants’ method of using visual texts to favour understanding and producing written and spoken texts relates to the distinction Corder (1966) makes in his seminal study, *The visual element in language teaching*, about the different uses of images. Corder distinguishes between ‘talking *about* images’ and ‘talking *with* images’. The author explains that talking ‘about’ images constitutes the simple act of describing them, whereas talking ‘with’ images involves interpreting them and producing personal responses. In the descriptions the participants provided about their use

of visual texts, their classroom practices were limited to talking (or writing) *about* visual texts, not *with* visual texts. Hence, they referred to their use of visual texts as ‘prompts’, ‘starters’ or ‘triggers’, which prepared learners for the ‘real content’ – written texts (printed or digital).

A view of visual texts as subordinate to written texts challenges the idea that all kinds of semiotic representations work together in a continuum in literacy and language learning (de Silva Joyce, 2014; Donaghy & Xerri, 2017; Halliday, 2016; Kalantzis & Cope, 2014; Kress, 2010; Luke, 2018; The New London Group, 1996) and undermines the importance of learning to critically engage with visual texts and to represent ideas visually. While the participating teachers talked ‘about’ visual texts in class and successfully prompted their students to emulate this practice, it would be difficult to ascertain whether their pedagogies helped them foster the development of visual literacy skills, such as exploring the role of the context, audience and purpose of a visual text, evaluating and critically analysing visual texts, and producing them.

The notion of talking about visual texts may explain why the examples of classroom activities the participants provided did not focus explicitly on the cultural and contextual knowledge learners would need to possess in order to meaningfully and critically engage with a particular photograph, video, emoji, graph or website. As seen in the data analysis, all teachers reported employing different types of visual texts, but they did not explicitly elaborate on the cultural elements that might be highlighted by a particular text or how it would explicitly teach or help the learners make inferences about the context. As an example, although Georgie described her use of visual texts that ‘*push the females in positions of authority or doing competent activities*’ (Georgie, Interview 2 – 6.04.2016), she did not report explaining to her students why her chosen visual texts displayed women in positions of authority. Like Georgie, none of the other participants mentioned overtly teaching their students about the specific cultural nuances involved in the visual texts they chose to include in their pedagogies. Hence, four study participants addressed the fact that they often needed to rely on observing their students’ gestures and other cues to assess whether they understood the cultural connotations present in visual texts used in the classroom.

8.4 Careful visual text selection

What stood out the most within the participants’ self-reported practices specific to the use of visual texts, was the careful selection they all said they make in order to incorporate a particular visual text into a lesson. This practice has been reported to be common among English language teachers (de Silva Joyce, 2014; Donaghy & Xerri, 2017). Importantly, what is not always evident is if, when deciding

which visual texts to incorporate in their teaching, educators ask themselves whether these act merely as an aid or support to written and spoken language development, or if they constitute a significant element of communicating in a foreign language, and a means of fostering students' communicative competence in the culture of the language. Donaghy & Xerri (2017) argue:

Despite the fact that there has been a gradual shift towards a more critical and creative use of both still and moving images in ELT coursebooks and the ELT classroom, images are still not being fully exploited as multimodal texts, and there is little focus on multiliteracies pedagogy as well as little effort to develop learners' visual literacy (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017, p. 4).

The study participants demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility for ensuring that any visual text they incorporate in a lesson is carefully chosen. Their rationale behind tailoring texts to lesson objectives included: maximising their use of valuable lesson time, avoiding the risk of exposing their students to content teachers deemed irrelevant to learners' needs as overseas students or migrants, and proving teacher sensitivity to their learners' socio-cultural backgrounds. These considerations reiterate the idea that due to the need to prepare students for university or to seek employment, these adult English language teachers selected visual texts that specifically complemented their lessons, linked to learning objectives prescribed by curricula. Therefore, they employed visual texts with literal representations of the vocabulary being taught – not necessarily representations of complex concepts.

On the surface, the practice of selecting visual materials with specific adult learners of English in mind seems beneficial. Indeed, the study participants indicated that surrounding learners with precise content that helps them learn vocabulary and grammar useful for their adjustment to the host culture, is advantageous. They also seemed keen on providing their students with a culturally-sensitive environment that would not offend any cultural, political or religious beliefs. These may seem desirable features of a language learning experience. However, the reality is that outside of the classroom, the environment is crowded by visual texts that depict people of diverse cultures, classes, religions, races and political views, just to name a few of the elements that shape a society (Hall, 1990). Often, these everyday visual texts do not match the curated illustrations in English language textbooks or photographs, videos and websites selected by the teachers as supporting materials.

Practices mentioned by Mercedes and Lourdes, such as shielding Muslim students from pictures of women with uncovered arms or legs, and using only visual texts that contain student-related activities (e.g., studying, grocery shopping), respectively, may not enable adult learners of English to

meaningfully and critically engage with the variety of visual representations that they are exposed to in different contexts. Furthermore, avoiding complex and/or abstract visual texts that may attract multiple interpretations, may not contribute to the development of visual or traditional literacy skills. Thus, a censored classroom environment, with the sanitised use of visual texts and overt political correctness, is potentially hindering the process of critically engaged language learning.

8.5 Teacher roles in their use of visual texts

The findings indicate that the participants approached visual texts differently depending on what they planned to do with such texts in a specific lesson. Their objectives incorporated personal views on visual text relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness (see Section 6.3). How teachers may form and apply criteria for their practice is influenced by traits that originate in the different roles that they may enact in their classrooms, as they make decisions about implementing a particular pedagogic strategy and selecting and using classroom resources (Ellison, 2013; Farrell, 2011; Kleinsasser et al., 1994; Robu & Muresan, 2018; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004) – such as visual texts. Farrell (2011) asserts that the different roles language teachers adopt in their classroom, and the behaviours attached to such roles, strongly influence their teaching practices. These roles can be understood as ‘unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught’ (Kagan, 1992, p. 65).

In the context of this study, it might not necessarily be that educators purposely set out to ‘perform’ a specific role (at least not all the time), but they did seem to shift their approaches to using visual texts, depending on the different student cohorts they were teaching, the resources available at their workplace and the complexity of the content to be taught. According to Farrell (2011), there are three main roles that English language teachers adopt: the ‘manager’, the ‘acculturator’ and the ‘professional’. These roles are a ‘configuration of interpretations that language teachers attach to themselves’ (p. 55) in relation to their various duties, responsibilities and actions in their teaching and learning context.

From a ‘teacher as manager’ perspective, the educator is the person in charge of controlling the events, interactions and processes that take place in the classroom. The ‘teacher as acculturator’ refers to the educator’s position as the person who engages in different practices outside of the classroom – collecting information along the way – and who ensures that, by sharing this knowledge with their students, they become accustomed to the local culture. Finally, the role of ‘teacher as professional’ is related to the image educators often construct about themselves, as seen by others

as a person who is dedicated and experienced in their chosen – teaching – profession (Farrell, 2011). Characteristics of the three different roles permeated the study participants' reported examples of what criteria they considered when choosing a visual text to incorporate into a lesson. Furthermore, findings from the focus group discussion about whether the visual texts selected to represent the teachers' ideas of community could or should be used in adult ELT revealed that all the participants presented a strong sense of their perceived need to control and censor everything that happens in the classroom.

The roles educators adopt in their classrooms are influenced by teacher beliefs (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Pajares, 1992; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004), which are formed upon specialised knowledge and experiences, as well as their sharing of a collective culture (Eberly, Joshi, Konzal, & Galen, 2010; Harkness et al., 2007; Sigel & Myung-In, 1996). The discussion about the *Vive la Commune* illustration (see Section 6.4.3), for instance, exemplifies how teachers adopt different roles toward the use of visual texts depending on specific situations. During the focus group, when this illustration was first introduced, some of the participants expressed their admiration for its aesthetic value, and agreed with Jacob – who selected it – that it was an effective portrayal of the idea of community. Nevertheless, when asked if and how they would employ this visual text to explain the concept of community to their adult ELT learners, all the focus groups participants said unanimously that they would never include *Vive la Commune* in their lessons, as it would be too hard to explain, would waste too much class time and could offend some students. The manager/aculturator in each teacher decided not to engage in a complex explanation of the historical meaning of this visual text, and at the same time chose not to introduce what they judged to be socio-culturally/politically sensitive material.

Examining the self-reported practices that suggest adult English language teachers adopt different roles in the classroom helped to understand the study participants' rationale for selecting visual texts, and their responses to how they would visually represent the idea of community but would refrain from showing a particular visual text to their students. Importantly, the teacher role that manifested the most in the participants' views in relation to use of visual texts was that of them as 'managers'. Kleinsasser et al. (1994), who have also explored the teacher as manager, refer to this role as that of the 'gate-keeper'. Below, I discuss findings which foreground examples of how teachers' perceptions of themselves as managers/gate-keepers, acculturators and professionals influenced their reported practices about visual text selection and usage.

8.5.1 The teacher as manager/gate-keeper

The study found evidence of the participating teachers' classroom manager approaches in their selective inclusion and exclusion of particular visual texts for their English language lessons. By deeming a specific visual text or type of visual text (e.g., abstract depictions) as 'too hard' for their English language learners to make meaning from, and admitting that they would not employ a photograph, illustration or painting in the classroom because this would not suit the purpose of a given lesson, the teachers effectively implemented gate-keeping strategies. According to Kleinsasser et al. (1994), gate-keepers control activity in the classroom in order to keep students focused on the task at hand informed by the lesson's objectives, and to shape them into willing and active participants in the discipline. Gate-keepers also expect learners to conform to teacher-prescribed conventions. In this study, the educators' preoccupation for their students failing to understand a visual text because it could potentially be interpreted with more than one – the intended – meaning, illustrates a gate-keeper teacher's view. The teachers' self-perception as the holders of the 'right' meaning (or focus) brings up issues of power, which are linked to the cultural and critical dimensions of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b) involved in making meaning of a visual text based on connections to previous experiences, and using such interpretations to actively engage in the culture of the classroom, respectively.

Farrell (2011) suggests that the 'teacher as manager' perspective manifests when educators attempt to plan and pre-empt everything that happens in the classroom. Jacob's view serves as illustration of this idea: *'How I know if they [the students] have really understood [an image] is when I get the feedback that I expect'* (Jacob, ELICOS Focus Group – 02.08.2016) (see data analysis Section 6.6.1). Here, Jacob evaluated the effectiveness of his visual text selection by whether he could elicit the specific student feedback he predicted. This approach places the teacher as a powerful mediator, responsible for 'helping' students – the 'Others' (Fine, 1994) – who are then required to adhere to prescribed ways of thinking, in order to adjust to culturally expected academic or social standards. In relation to the study participants, it could be argued that a prevailing manager/gate-keeper approach to visual literacy might limit their ELT practices that incorporate visual texts based only on whether these are conducive to what meaning teachers expect (or hope) their students will decode from a visual text, and on how their interpretations support the development of written or oral language skills.

Contrasting the choice to avoid employing a culturally layered visual text – such as *Vive la Commune* – in their adult English language classrooms, the participating teachers were in favour of potentially

incorporating into a lesson ‘less complicated pictures’, which were closer to being a literal depiction of the concept discussed – community. Again, personal beliefs that placed teachers in the role of classroom managers/gate-keepers, seemed to motivate them to deem photographs of people from various ethnic backgrounds (see Figures 15 and 16), people making pizza (see Figure 14) and people in a community garden (see Figure 13) to be ‘suitable’ for adult learners of English and ‘easier to use’ in their pedagogies. From a three-dimensional view of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b), restricting a literacy event such as representing a personal idea with a visual text, to suit prescribed adult ELT objectives, emphasises the teachers’ operational approach to visual text selection.

8.5.2 The teacher as acculturator

Another practice identified in the teachers’ descriptions of their classroom practices, was that they used visual texts to help their students navigate everyday life situations. This approach is linked to the second distinctive role a teacher enacts in the classroom, which Farrell (2011) calls ‘the acculturator’. Farrell argues that this role is very common among English language teachers, as educators see themselves as well-informed authorities, responsible for assisting students in their adjustment to the local culture. Language teachers might enact the role of acculturator in various contexts. For instance, they may take on board introducing elements of the ‘local culture’ (Barker, 2012; Du Gay et al., 1997; Hall, 1990; Lewis, 2011), such as the customs of people in a geographical setting, the neighbourhood where the English language centre for migrants or international students is located, the city and so on. Then, at a classroom level, the acculturator’s role may entail establishing common teacher and student understandings and practices, which are, in turn, informed by the culture of the institution where teaching and learning takes place.

Approaches to ‘acculturating’ were evident when the study participants reported employing different types of visual texts according to the literacy levels of their students and their future pathways. As a case in point, the teachers selected simple, literal, printed pictures for classes of adult migrant learners, and complex mobile technology-based multimodal texts for international students preparing for university (see Section 7.3). Notably, half of the participants made specific reference to the importance of helping their students to learn how to use various technologies people need to operate in today’s society – such as email or Microsoft PowerPoint – in order to qualify for employment or to prepare a presentation for university. Given the prominent place digital technologies currently occupy in educational environments (Brumberger, 2011; Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013; Messaris, 2012; Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012), it seems only normal that teachers want their students to engage with these

media, so that they can be active agents in the world surrounding them, and are able to actively and meaningfully participate in its culture(s) (Hall, 1996).

The great deal of attention given to the use of technologies in their classrooms foregrounded that the participants seemed to equate engaging students with visual texts in the classroom to teaching them how to operate digital technologies proficiently. Jenny's example of what she considered a way to include visual literacy in her teaching practices illustrates the interchangeability with which visual literacy and the use of digital technologies might be perceived in adult ELT: *'I just get them to find an image on the internet and bring it across because it's developing a computer skill where they have to go to the internet, they have to source, they have to learn to copy and paste and so on'* (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016). This perspective highlights the evolving nature of the notion of visual literacy, and suggests the need for clear guidelines for adult English language teachers, so that these can inform their use of visual texts in their ELT classrooms.

Farrell (2011) suggests that the acculturator is also 'a role where the teacher offers advice to students just like that of a social worker' (p. 58). Thus, when enacting this role, teachers also deal with affective reactions that take place in the classroom. This approach was evident in the participants' views in which, in addition to the criteria they took into account for their visual text selection that suited the learning outcomes of a lesson, they also considered both their own feelings about a visual text, and the feelings they assumed these might provoke in their students. Their selection of visual texts that contained only 'non-offensive' and inclusive depictions (e.g., a mix of different ethnicities, ages and genders, and people who looked like students of English: see Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2), were examples of the teachers assuming the roles of acculturator and manager.

The participating adult English language teachers, as mediators in classrooms populated by people from diverse backgrounds, possessed and made use of their awareness of the many cultural nuances of the context in which visual texts are viewed (Callow, 2012; Serafini, 2017). It seems that they felt it was not relevant to encourage their adult students to develop visual literacy skills, even though the potentially diverse ways in which the learners might see the visual texts would be rich resources to help them see how context and experience can shape their 'reading' of such texts. Whether their decision was based on the exigencies of the curriculum (where the teacher is the manager) or on their desire to protect students from feeling confronted with unwelcome emotions (the teacher as acculturator), the teachers consciously shaped the classroom experience for their learners.

8.5.3 The teacher as professional

The teacher as professional role (Farrell, 2011) was also found to be prominent in all participants in the study. During the interviews and focus groups, the teachers consistently maintained their stance as English language educators, with perceptions of visual literacy seemingly formed upon beliefs stemming from their professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2000; Farrell, 2011; Kleinsasser et al., 1994; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Consistently, the practices they reported reflected a strong sense of who they are as professionals in the adult ELT field. Farrell (2011) claims that teachers see themselves as people who are dedicated to their work and therefore take very seriously the task of developing practices which are for the benefit of their students. From their reported practices, there was no doubt that the participating teachers incorporated visual texts in their pedagogies, but these activities were guided by the inherited notion that imagery is a subordinate component in their language teaching (Kress, 2000) and used only to elicit spoken or written English.

It appears that, by using visual texts to assist the development of reading and writing skills, the participants believed that they fulfilled their role as English language educators, who used every possible resource to do the best job they could. Coincidentally, the experience of taking part in this research seemed to raise genuine concern among participants for the need to explicitly address visual literacy in both teacher education and English language courses for overseas students and migrants. This concern is consistent with the argument that, although terms such as visual literacy, visual communication and visual thinking are part of a modern educator's discourse repertoire, this does not necessarily mean that they possess knowledge of the competencies that characterise a visually literate learner (Eilam, 2012; Farrell, 2015; Flood, 2004; Noad, 2005).

The particular views of two of the participants exemplified traits of the teacher as professional, based on their personal interests, which seemed to inform their self-perception as professional adult English language teachers. They considered themselves artistic or creative people, stating that teachers' use of visual texts in the classroom is often guided by their ability to do so. Muriel stated: *'Personally, I really love images . . . Because I draw and paint'* (Muriel, Interview 14 – 26.05.2016). Along similar lines, Jenny said: *'I've been using visuals in my classes because I'm a visual person. I'm constantly looking at images anyway and working out how they could be useful in the classroom'* (Jenny, Interview 12 – 16.05.2016). These views suggest that they see visual texts as expedient in language learning, and engaging in these practices would therefore reflect positively on them as teachers.

8.5.4 Teacher roles over knowledge of visual literacy

Overall, the findings indicate that the participating adult English language teachers' pedagogies which incorporate visual texts, reflect traits of the manager/gate-keeper, acculturator and professional teacher roles that seem intrinsic to their identity as professionals in the adult ELT field (Farrell, 2011). Understanding how these roles affect the ways in which they incorporate visual texts in their classroom practices is powerful, as this knowledge can help teachers themselves to align their use of visual texts with the practices they consider important for language development. This awareness may promote the idea that overt or embedded teaching of visual literacy can – and should – be included in the repertoire of practices that characterise a 'complete' and competent adult English language teacher.

Thinking of visual literacy as part of managing the language classroom, acculturating students and maintaining a professional stance, could consequently help shift the development of visual literacy in adult ELT, from its current status of secondary or complementary to traditional written/spoken literacy, to concurrent and equally important. This can only happen, of course, if the goals of adult English language teachers include preparing adult learners of English to critically and meaningfully engage with visual texts in an increasingly visual world. In accord with this intention, ideas of student academic success (in ELICOS) or employability (in Government funded English language programs) need to advance from exclusive concerns for reading, writing, listening and speaking proficiency, to comprehending, analysing, critiquing and effectively producing visual texts.

Looking through the lens of literacy in three dimensions (Green, 1988, 2012b), the findings emphasise operational and cultural elements of understanding and engaging with visual texts, to a greater extent than aspects from the critical dimension. More precisely, the participating teachers' views demonstrated that their main concerns were how specific visual texts could be used to elicit written or spoken language in their teaching, and the relevance of such texts to language learning objectives for specific contexts such as academic performance at university and successful adjustment to life in Australia. This means that there was limited interest for processes that are directly linked to the critical dimension, such as how adult English language learners might understand 'the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images and visual media, and access and use visual materials ethically' (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2011, p. 1). Explicit interest in helping their adult English language learners develop these critical abilities was not evident in the participants' views on visual literacy, nor in their reported practices.

Irrespective of how the participants articulated their views about what visual texts are apt for their classrooms, it was clear that they chose to censor or privilege certain visual texts. This finding emphasises gate-keeping practices (Farrell, 2011), implemented by the teachers to ensure they catered for diverse student cohorts and achieved their specific learning objectives set out for a particular lesson. The teachers' thinking of visual texts as too confronting, inappropriate or unsuitable for adult ELT relates to the notion of affect as vital in making classroom dynamics work (Cole, 2012; Deleuze, 1995). From an affective viewpoint (Callow, 2005), it is vital for teachers to take into account potential feelings provoked by their selection and use of certain visual texts. As predicated by Cultural Studies scholars (Barker, 2012; Hall et al., 1996; Lewis, 2011), how people understand culture and thus learn the language of that culture, is a process built upon ideas, beliefs and feelings that inform how individuals express themselves visually, in writing, speaking or in multimodal ways. Thus, in addition to their gate-keeping practices, the adult English language teacher as acculturator is in charge of acknowledging the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds their students originate from, and hence the contrasting affective reactions they may experience upon viewing particular visual texts.

8.6 Tenets of the adult ELT field

Examining how the study participants explained visual literacy individually, and then scrutinising their group discussions about if and why they would use a certain visual text in their lessons, helped me understand the extent to which their beliefs, personal and professional experiences might influence their understandings of visual literacy and pedagogical decisions. Analysing the data through the lens of Green's (1988, 2012b) 3D model of literacy highlighted tenets of the adult ELT field that manifested in the teachers' expressed views on the operational construct of language accuracy, the notion of language as culturally-bound, and their perceptions of their learners' ability to critically use their language skills, in order to operate in the context of where language occurs and to engage with it and transform it. Regardless of whether the participants saw visual literacy as an introductory medium to traditional literacy, or central to language learning, their decisions to include visual texts in their pedagogies were shaped by multiple beliefs and personal, professional and contextual factors (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Pennington & Richards, 2016).

All of the participating teachers' interviews were rich with references to their responsibilities as professionals in the adult ELT field. Indeed, they all indicated that the choices they make regarding incorporating visual texts in their pedagogies are not ad-hoc acts, but the reflection of firmly established language teacher beliefs and knowledge of their field, as well as personal and professional

experiences (Farrell, 2011; Inozu, 2011; Wach, 2013; Xiang & Borg, 2014). Thus, it seems that canons of the adult ELT field in Australia might be of great influence on teachers' approaches to visual literacy. These tenets are related to the teachers' pre-service education and in-service professional development programs, as well as to the different circumstances in contrasting institutional contexts in the two major sectors that constitute this area of Australia's education. Three major factors emerged in the study as limiting the development of visual literacy, and thus teachers' conceptualisations and practices: The ongoing effects of the historical paucity of consideration of visual literacy as an integral part of effective communication in curriculum and teacher experience, aggravated by the lack of overt instruction on visual literacy in teacher education programs; the contrasts in the teachers' and learners' access to technologies and resources; and the teachers' own perceptions about their student populations' capabilities.

8.6.1 Ongoing failure to include visual literacy as integral to effective communication

The study found that, although the majority of the participating teachers were aware of the term visual literacy, the accredited programs they had undertaken in preparation to teach in the ELT profession (e.g., CELTA, DELTA, Master of TESOL) had not addressed it. While the teachers' views discussed above indicate that visual literacy is present in their minds, how they understand this notion and related concepts, or apply it in their visual text selection and use, is not based on evidence or instruction (de Silva Joyce, 2014). This limitation seems to be inherent in the ongoing failure of curriculum, programs and theories underpinning them, to see visual literacy as an integral and important part of effective communication.

Although it would be difficult to establish where the problem begins, a starting point could be little attention visual literacy receives in relation to the strong emphasis on the development of traditional literacy skills that remains pervasive in Australia's adult ELT industry (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007; Carey & Robertson, 2015). This focus is reflected in the curricula governing adult ELT programs (Atkinson, 2017; Burns, 2003; Feez, 2001; McKay & Brindley, 2007), as well as in ELT research in Australia (Burns, 2015), and supported by the systems that are currently in place to test English language proficiency (Elder & O'Loughlin, 2003; Feast, 2002; Gribble et al., 2016).

Given the limited attention to visual literacy in ELICOS and Government-funded English language programs for adult migrants and refugees, educators in the field are, presumably, not required to 'know' about the subject. Accordingly, ELT as a profession in Australia does not train educators in teaching the skills and processes involved in understanding and producing visual texts, nor does it

overtly address how these skills and processes intersect with English language learning, even though this field has centred on learning how to communicate effectively. This omission in training seems based on the assumption that formal education and professional development programs for future adult English language teachers are informed by the needs of the learners – overseas students and migrants, as articulated by curricula in ELICOS and Government-funded English language courses.

In relation to the area of visual literacy research in adult ELT, precisely due to the omission of visual literacy in their training programs, it could be argued that once adult English language teachers practise in their field, they may not have the interest or foundations to explore research in this specific area. Thus, visual literacy continues to be underexplored or neglected. Importantly, researchers such as Alter (2009), Brown (2016), Farrell (2015), Milbourn (2013) and Spalter and van Dam (2008) argue that although the term visual literacy has become more commonly used amongst educators, it is a mistake to assume that they always know what being a visually literate person means. Correspondingly, Peña Alonso (2018) argues that visual literacy – as is the case with other literacies – can and should be overtly taught, thus, it cannot be taken for granted that understandings of visual literacy are instinctively formed or absorbed by adult English language teachers in training.

8.6.2 Teachers' access to visual texts

The findings uncovered a disparity of resources available in the participants' workplaces in relation to the teachers' access to visual texts through technologies. For example, data from Section 7.3 showed that having digital technologies at their disposal motivated ELICOS teachers to incorporate visual texts in their pedagogies with overseas students, whereas inadequate access to resources restricted teachers in Government-funded providers for migrants and refugees. Regardless of the purpose for their use of visual texts (e.g., teaching grammar, drilling presentation skills), being able to quickly search for pictures or videos online and to instantly show them to their students, was considered a great advantage for ELICOS teachers. They valued modern resources available to them, and saw these as essential to 'do a good job'. These teachers' views on the importance of using technology are in line with the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment [SCOTESE], 2012), which includes digital literacy and ICT within the notions of literacy and employability skills.

Importantly, whereas digital literacy is perceived to be supportive of written literacy (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment [SCOTESE], 2012), and thus seen as a key contributor to Australia's prosperity (Mayer, 2016), visual literacy does not hold the same status – at least not in

official documents. Hence, visual literacy is not included in the notion of foundation skills, which, according to the SCOTese Strategy (2012), are essential for people in Australia to succeed at work. Correspondingly, this economic view influences how the participating teachers frame visual literacy as ancillary in relation to traditional literacy: they embed visual texts in their pedagogic practices, as long as these continue to target ELT's primary objective, that is, the development of reading and writing skills (Harmer, 2013). It could also be argued that the same economic perspective on what constitutes essential skills influences how adult English language centres allocate their financial resources.

In contrast to the availability of digital resources to access visual texts in the ELICOS sector, access to technology was inconsistent, and in most cases insufficient, for Government-funded teachers of adult migrants. Thus, their options to employ visual texts were more limited. These teachers (eight in this study) often incorporated visual texts in their lessons by more traditional paper-reliant means, such as drawing and picture-books, and also their body language. Out of these eight participants from Government-funded providers, five described low levels of enthusiasm about using visual texts, due to workplace constraints in terms of resources and student cohorts. Two of these teachers reported feeling ill-prepared to engage with visual texts through digital technologies – despite their desire to do so – due to their limited access to technologies they could use to search for visual texts. This finding is supported by the idea that teachers are often reluctant to incorporate emerging visual technologies into their pedagogies due to insufficient access and training (Harrison et al., 2002; Passey, 1997; Preston, Cox, & Cox, 2000). Such feelings of inadequacy and even frustration are understandable, given that effective use of technology is not something that simply happens. Rather, literacy capabilities are acquired through formal teaching (Lankshear, Snyder, & Green, 2000; Tour, 2010).

8.6.3 Contrasting levels of literacy in student cohorts

Another component of the institutional context that was found to be significant in shaping the participants' use of visual texts in their pedagogies, was the varying levels of literacy in the student cohorts they taught. Three of the teachers in the Government-funded sector emphasised the limitations that they thought their low-literacy adult migrant learners would encounter if presented with complex visual texts. Their perspectives suggested the understanding that someone who is unable to express in words what they think of a visual text, must also possess limited capacity to critically analyse it, and must therefore be visually illiterate. However, it would be worth considering the following counterargument: If a learner is not literate in written or spoken English, would not their visual literacy be perhaps heightened, as this would be their alternative resource for receiving and

decoding information? In this case, by simplifying what their learners see, the teachers would be doing them a disservice.

In contrast to the three teachers of adult migrants who indicated that low written or spoken literacy would impede visual literacy, Jacob – a teacher of international students with advanced English language literacy levels – praised the outstanding work (in his view) of some of his ELICOS students, who had not included words in their response journal assessment task. Jacob's approach to valuing his students' work with visual texts suggests that he did not see low English language literacy as a limitation to visual literacy. Importantly, he showed that regardless of his appreciation for visual literacy, he considered visual representation an accurate indication of learning in his adult ELT classroom. This view is important, as it may be an indication of a shift in what adult English language teachers consider important in their practice, and evidence of a rising interest in facilitating the development of visual literacy skills, rather than limiting efforts to preparing overseas students for university or helping migrants settle in Australia by teaching them reading, writing and speaking conventions.

8.7 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings reported and analysed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 in relation to the study's research questions, and articulated in what ways this research extends current knowledge of visual literacy in the Australian adult ELT context. The discussion highlighted elements typical of the adult ELT field, which influence the participating teachers' understanding of visual literacy in their context, as well as the role visual texts play in their classroom practices.

The discussion began by identifying that the participating adult English language teachers' understandings of visual literacy were deeply rooted in their professional goal of promoting traditional written/spoken literacy. This restricted view suggests these professionals' inadequate foundations in the concept of visual literacy, which in turn poses a challenge in fostering adult English language learners' development of the visual literacy competencies needed by 21st century individuals in order to be active and transforming agents in their society. The subsequent part of the discussion addressed the extent to which visual literacy instruction featured in the participants' pedagogies. This section emphasised the study participants' understanding of visual texts as devices that assist or complement the development of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. This approach relegates to a less prominent place the need to learn how to critically engage with visual texts and to represent ideas visually.

The discussion also addressed two main points identified in the participants' reported practices that incorporate the use of visual texts. Firstly, it was evident that their visual text selection is a carefully thought out process. Although the teachers did not overtly use visual texts with the goal of helping their learners develop visual literacy competencies, they did take into consideration socio-cultural aspects of engaging with visual texts. Their awareness of these aspects manifested as they selected visual texts that did not challenge any students' cultural or religious beliefs, were relevant to their needs as overseas students or migrants, and would fit language learning outcomes. The teachers' visual text selection was clearly subject to what they planned to do with such texts in a specific lesson. The discussion linked this approach to the affective reactions learners may experience upon viewing particular visual texts and to the three different roles that English language teachers may adopt when incorporating visual texts in their classrooms practices: the manager/gate-keeper, the acculturator and the professional (Farrell, 2011; Kleinsasser et al., 1994).

The chapter concludes with a discussion about three key aspects of adult ELT that influence the teachers' thinking about visual literacy and how this translates into classroom practices that include the use of visual texts. These aspects are: the lack of overt instruction regarding visual literacy in pre-service education courses and in available in-service professional development programs for adult English language teachers, the varying access to resources and technologies that facilitate or hinder educators' use of visual texts in the adult English classroom; and their perception of how the contrasting levels of literacy in their student populations may affect their abilities to engage critically and meaningfully with visual texts.

9 CONCLUSION

Concerned by the apparent inadequate visual literacy instruction in the adult ELT field in Australia, in this study, I set out to explore educators' understandings of visual literacy in the context of ELICOS and Government-funded language and literacy programs for adult migrants and refugees. Four key aspects of the current adult ELT landscape in Australia underpin this research. Firstly, there is a stark contrast between the explicit efforts made in the primary and secondary school sectors of Australian education to develop learners' visual literacy (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2018), and the insufficient ways in which visual literacy and viewing have been addressed in adult ELT (de Silva Joyce, 2014). Secondly, curricula across ELICOS and Government-funded programs differ depending on the provider (Carey & Robertson, 2015), which makes it difficult to ascertain whether the critical and meaningful engagement with visual text is promoted in ELT classrooms. Thirdly, visual literacy has not been adequately theorised within adult ELT research in Australia, in contrast to the extensive research that has been conducted on the development of traditional literacy skills (Brandon, 2015; Burns, 2015). Finally, visual literacy is absent in the list of basic capabilities required of adult learners to gain access to further education or employment (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment [SCOTESE], 2012).

In this final chapter, I explain the contributions of my study to the body of knowledge in the fields of visual literacy and adult ELT, highlighting what can be learnt from my research by educators, researchers and policy makers, who play an essential role in the design and delivery of adult ELT curricula. I also reflect on some limitations encountered during the PhD research process, and discuss implications of the study, which focus on the need to incorporate visual literacy in pre-service education and professional development programs for adult English language teachers. Furthermore, I pose suggestions as to how this study may inform future research on visual literacy within the adult ELT context.

9.1 Contributions to the field

This research provides new insights on adult English language teachers' thinking about visual literacy and on the ways in which these views inform their classroom practices with visual texts, specifically in the Australian adult ELT context. While numerous researchers have contributed to the body of knowledge of visual literacy in Australian school settings (e.g., Arthurson & Cozmescu, 2007; Asha, 2009; Atkins, 2006; Barton, 2016; Brown, 1989; Bull & Anstey, 2007; Callow, 2003, 2007, 2016; Flood,

2004; Wilson, 2010), in the matter of investigating visual literacy, the adult education field is still in its early stages. Furthermore, research addressing visual literacy in adult ELT in Australia (e.g., de Silva Joyce, 2014) has concentrated on the adult migrant literacy and language area, leaving only a narrow body of knowledge based on scholarly work on visual literacy in the ELICOS sector.

Building upon visual literacy research on a global scale, the study inquired into adult English language teachers' perspectives on visual literacy and their classroom practices in relation to the use of visual texts, framed within their professional and educational experiences. This examination contributes to understanding how educators conceptualise and apply visual literacy in the cultural context of adult learning, so that these views may inform curriculum and their pedagogic practices. The study is unique in that it explores views of teachers delivering ELICOS programs for overseas students preparing for tertiary studies onshore, as well as of teachers in Government-funded language and literacy programs for adult migrants and refugees. Also an important feature of the study is that, informed by extensive research on visual literacy in various disciplines (e.g., Avgerinou, 2009; Bamford, 2003; Brumberger, 2011; Elkins, 2010; Farrell, 2015; Messaris, 2012; Peña Alonso, 2018; Serafini, 2017; Wilson, 2010), it links together this subject with adult education and ELT. Notably, in Australia, visual literacy, adult education and ELT have not been explored simultaneously, not to mention from educators' points of view.

This study stands out as it concentrates on the participating teachers' views of their own classroom practices related to visual literacy, unlike previous research in the Australian adult ELT field, which focuses on the adult English language learner experience. Thus, implications of this research contribute to and expand the limited scholarly work carried out in visual literacy in adult ELT in Australia from the teachers' perspective. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, this study is the first in the Australian adult ELT context to employ Green's 3D model of literacy (Green, 1988, 2012b) as the underpinning theory to frame teachers' understanding of visual literacy, while simultaneously considering the affective dimension involved in engaging with visual texts, which was proposed by Callow (2005). As articulated by Green himself, the 3D model was originally conceived with writing in school settings in mind. However, this study expands educational perspectives by applying, in the adult ELT field, the concept of the operational, cultural and critical dimensions of literacy, as well as the affective aspects of engaging with, evaluating and producing visual texts.

The study is also distinctive in how an activity-oriented focus group as a method of data collection was set up. The first part of the discussions during the two focus groups were based on Visual Thinking

Strategies (VTS) (Yenawine, 2014). Implementation of a variation of this innovative teaching methodology proved successful in providing all participants equally ample opportunities to contribute to the discussion. It facilitated a space for deep reflection about their visual text selection, and provided opportunities to share practical examples and the rationales behind these pedagogies. What made my use of VTS innovative is that, although it has been traditionally used with pedagogical purposes in a variety of settings – including education institutions, art museums and professional workplaces, in this study I did not employ VTS to ‘teach’ anything to the participating teachers. Rather, I took advantage of this methodology to elicit their own ideas about visual text selection and their rationale behind this practice. In my view, a similar approach can be adopted in many research contexts, as discussing ideas participants generate when considering visual texts can contribute to building rich datasets that complement other qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviews or observations.

9.2 Limitations of the study

In this section, I reflect on the limitations that emerged during the study. To begin with, although a case study methodology proved appropriate to conduct a thorough investigation informed by my research questions and aims, I must acknowledge that the findings drawn from this small sample of participants may not be generalised to the Australian population of adult English language teachers, nor was this my intention. It could be argued that a larger sample could bring up other issues which were not apparent within this cohort of participants, who were located in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Nevertheless, the study participants displayed views and key characteristics of adult English language teachers that might be representative of the views of many other educators. Furthermore, the combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups – and within the latter, the use of photo-elicitation and VTS to facilitate the discussions – provided a rich tapestry of data comprising the participating teachers’ perceptions, opinions and experiences. Thus, researchers who wish to transfer the results of this investigation to other discipline areas, can use the description of the study’s context and the assumptions that were central to it, and evaluate the extent to which the findings apply to new situations related to the use of new literacies – such as visual literacy.

Another limitation was related to access to alternative sources of data – typical of case studies – other than through interviews and focus groups. Due to the commercial value of curriculum information in English language centres, relevant documents were not available. Therefore, I did not engage in document analysis, which I had originally thought of as a potential complementary method. I had also considered conducting classroom observations, so I could watch educators ‘in action’, that is, witness

how they employed visual texts in their adult ELT environments. However, this was not feasible in ELICOS centres, as they are, essentially, commercial competitors who protect their intellectual property. Thus, to explore how all participants approached visual text selection and use in their English language classrooms, I relied on their self-reported examples of their pedagogic approaches to visual literacy. This method might raise questions about the authenticity of the participants' descriptions of their practices. Nevertheless, in order to avoid the tendency of some research participants to report an answer in a way they deem to be socially acceptable – a psychologic phenomenon known as 'the Hawthorne effect' (Mackey & Gass, 2005) – I positioned myself as a peer adult English language teacher, and made it clear to the study participants that there were no right or wrong answers.

Other limitations were circumstantial and surfaced once the research study was in motion. For example, due to the teachers' geographic location and their conflicting working schedules, not all of who agreed to an individual interview were able to participate in the two focus groups. Furthermore, each focus group was conducted among colleagues from the same institution, as finding a suitable time for members of both sectors to meet proved logistically impractical. Thus, although the simultaneous inclusion in the study of participants from both the ELICOS and Government-funded sectors provided rich data, it would be difficult to identify how the existing relationships between focus groups participants may have affected their responses and interactions, and thus, the data obtained. For future research it would be useful to explore views of participants from both sectors and who do not know each other as they engage in discussion about visual literacy and their use of visual texts in their classrooms.

9.3 Implications for adult ELT practice

Taking into account the limitations outlined above, in the following three sections I explain in detail key implications of the study. These implications were identified with the goal of addressing adult English language teachers' professional needs in relation to the inclusion of visual literacy in their pedagogies within the cultural context of adult learning. It is hoped that this new knowledge can inform formal pre-service education and professional development programs for current and future educators. Teachers' understandings of visual literacy and awareness of its importance in adult ELT can also be used to enhance curriculum design and classroom delivery in the ever-growing industry of ELICOS and Government-funded language and literacy programs for adult migrants and refugees.

9.3.1 Contextualising and reframing teachers' thinking

The study's findings reinforce previous research which indicates that understanding and defining visual literacy is subject to the context in which it is examined. For instance, Avgerinou (2009) argues that a single agreed-upon definition is not forthcoming, despite scholarly studies which have investigated many theories and pedagogical approaches associated with visual literacy. Thus, the concept needs to be framed within the specific ideas, views, beliefs and experiences of the people who engage with visual texts. By way of illustration, visual literacy from the point of view of an arts educator might mean that a learner is able to understand artworks and critique them; for a health professional, visual literacy might involve a patient pointing at an anatomic illustration to indicate where they hurt, and for the clinician to interpret this symptom. In contrast, in adult ELT, ideas related to traditional literacy will be naturally dominant. This explains the study participants' emphasis on their views of visual texts playing a supportive role in the development of reading, writing, listening and oral production, and their need to control all aspects of the use of such texts, from their selection to determining how learners could best engage with them.

In light of prevailing ELT views, rather than adhering to definitions that stem from disciplines such as the arts, design or visual communication, or from the mainstream primary or secondary classrooms, visual literacy in adult ELT needs to be understood from the perspective that by building upon the skills students need in order to be able to read and write, teachers would in fact be helping them increase their literacy levels in all areas. This approach would assist teachers in their selection and use of visual texts, and in this process, take into account specific student audiences, their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and prior literacies. By adopting this stance, educators could still tailor their practices in relation to the language goals of the programs they teach (e.g., adjusting to life as a migrant/refugee in Australia or preparing for further studies) with confidence in knowing that, by dedicating time and attention to fostering their students' meaningful engagement with visual texts, they would not be 'deviating' from their responsibilities as adult English language teachers.

9.3.2 Incorporating visual literacy in adult English language teachers' education

This study does not claim that adult English language teachers need to be 'visual literacy teachers'. However, it suggests that to incorporate visual literacy in their classrooms practices, English language teachers need to acquire knowledge of principles of visual literacy and pedagogical implications themselves. Teachers' better understanding and knowledge of visual literacy can: a) improve or enhance their selection and use of visual texts in the classroom, and b) help them see how they can assist their students in the development of visual literacy alongside written literacy and oracy – and

optimise them all. In a multimodal era, adult English language teachers can – and should – facilitate the learners’ process of becoming critical consumers of information presented via visual language, as well as competent producers of visual texts. These processes are essential elements of visual literacy, which is part of the repertoire of competencies required for 21st century communication, which no longer focuses exclusively on written or spoken language.

To achieve the goal of fostering the development of visual literacy, overt instruction on the topic needs to be implemented in English language teacher education programs focusing on the adult sector, so they can acquire solid theoretical and pedagogical understanding that informs how they can incorporate visual literacy within their language teaching. Visual literacy must be presented to educators as ‘a well-organised body of knowledge concerning representational variety and related concepts, theories, and principles. These ideas are not “absorbed” spontaneously and must be carefully taught and acquired’ (Eilam, 2012, p. 96). Of course, it must be noted that including visual literacy in teacher education programs might be a complex endeavour, as ELT professionals come from many different backgrounds and their pre-service education varies from a four-week CELTA course to a master’s degree (Al-Issa, 2017; Rodriguez, 2016). This means that provision for explicit visual literacy training would not be standardised across the curricula in pre-service programs for adult English language teachers.

In light of the varying levels of pre-service education that adult English language teachers possess as they enter the workforce, a potential solution is that the authorities responsible for curriculum design and delivery in adult English language centres turn to on-the-job professional development initiatives and offer these to their teachers. Generating major changes in qualification requirements in an industry that is not as regulated or stringent as institutions in the primary and secondary schooling system might be challenging. Nonetheless, it is the adult English language program providers who have the authority (and responsibility) to support their teaching staff in acquiring knowledge of visual literacy for adult ELT purposes. Importantly, for this to happen, there needs to be a major shift across the adult ELT industry regarding its views on what literacies are considered essential for people to be able to join the labour market or to succeed in tertiary or vocational studies in Australia. In other words, as long as the development of competencies to critically engage with and produce visual texts remains considered secondary to achieving oral and written language proficiency, the conditions described above will not change.

9.3.3 Visual literacy standards to be embedded in adult ELT

While the study participants demonstrated interest in how suitable their visual text selection was in relation to their teaching objectives and the appropriateness of these texts in view of the socio-economic and cultural diversity in their student populations, they did not appear concerned with the visual literacy capabilities an adult English language learner should possess. This lack of attention to their students' visual literacy development could be linked to the absence of visual literacy standards in Australia's adult ELT. As has been argued, economic and political views weigh heavily on what the adult ELT industry considers critical elements of the education that adult overseas students, migrants and refugees receive on Australian shores (Jackson & Slade, 2008; Mayer, 2016; Schuller et al., 2004). Correspondingly, Government-funded programs for adult migrants and refugees aim for their students to achieve a certain degree of English language proficiency within the levels defined by the curriculum in accredited courses and training packages for adult literacy, such as the CSWE in the AMEP (Carey & Robertson, 2015; Martin, 2000). Similarly, curricula in ELICOS programs are designed in a way that English language learners can achieve traditional language skills according to the standards set by the IELTS exam. Success in achieving a certain IELTS score facilitates entry into university, accreditation into professional fields and/or employment (Feast, 2002; O'Loughlin, 2013).

In the case of English language preparation for university studies in Australia, interest in the relationship between success in the IELTS test and productivity has generated extensive research in the area of language testing, which often investigates issues specifically regarding the development and improvement of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills (Elder & O'Loughlin, 2003; Feast, 2002; Gribble et al., 2016; Ma, 2017; O'Loughlin, 2013). Meanwhile, in the field of adult migrant English research, the key concern seems to be helping English language learners to adjust to Australian society and obtain employment (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007; Ehrich et al., 2010; Feez, 2001; McKay & Brindley, 2007). However, since visual literacy is not something IELTS examines or universities/employers specifically require, this does not seem to be a subject of scholarly activity in adult ELT. This is one of the reasons why research such as the present study is important. More focused attention under the rigour of scholarly research is needed in the area of visual literacy in adult ELT, along with practical examples, in order to guide knowledge specific to the field and better establish the critical role of visual literacy within a repertoire of literacy practices for adult learners.

The lack of research on visual literacy in adult ELT, together with the contrast between programming for international students and for adult migrants and refugees, make the development of a comprehensive skill set and a curricular framework challenging. Consequently, setting visual literacy

standards for adult learners of English remains a complex task. Nevertheless, this is something that is needed in Australia. Just as the school system provides guidelines for the development of visual literacy skills, it is necessary to reframe adult ELT to include a view that visual literacy and visual texts interact with traditional literacy and oracy with their written and spoken texts, along a continuum of learning how to communicate effectively in a new language environment.

Setting visual literacy standards in adult ELT would support educators and policy makers in the field to form clear expectations of their students in relation to the skills they need to develop/enhance in order to identify, analyse and interpret visual texts in diverse environments, and employ and create visual texts as aspects of communicating in academic work or in everyday life. Consequently, this would allow educational institutions to develop learning objectives and assessment tasks that incorporate visual texts in meaningful ways, devise systems to evaluate students' visual literacy abilities, and implement strategies to make visual texts available to all learners. A step towards identifying ways in which visual literacy standards might be incorporated into adult ELT in Australia, could be an in-depth examination of the Visual Literacy Competency Standards in Higher Education outlined by the ACRL (2011), which have been adopted in many educational settings in the United States.

9.4 Recommendations for future research

Offering an alternative view to the body of research that examines visual literacy in learners across many disciplines, this research concentrated on understanding visual literacy from the point of view of practitioners in the adult ELT field. The inquiry included adult English language teachers in the Australian context regardless of the sector of this industry in which they worked. Yet, given the identified institutional differences between providers of English language programs for overseas students and for adult migrants and refugees, in the future, it would be worth conducting a comparative study with independent participant samples from both areas. A comparative study might be suitable to expand this research and build a deeper understanding that could contribute to the development of visual literacy in contrasting cohorts of student audiences – overseas students and migrants and refugees.

Future researchers interested in exploring visual literacy in adult ELT may also consider conducting classroom observations. Framing a future study of a larger scale with the objective of learning about visual text selection and classroom practices that include visual texts, may help overcome issues of privacy and commercial competition across English language centres. A study that aims to observe

and document best pedagogical practices in relation to the use of visual texts might inspire people at the helm of English language centres to allow outsiders (i.e., researchers) access to curricula and into their teachers' classrooms. Learnings from both observations and document analysis, together with the knowledge this study provided about what adult English language teachers understand as visual literacy, may lead scholars and policy makers in the field of adult ELT to consider identifying and incorporating visual literacy standards in their curricula, in addition to the existing reading, writing, listening and speaking requirements. In this case, future research would require a more interventionist approach where the researcher works with teachers and institutions in adult ELT around the introduction of visual literacy.

Complementing research on the inclusion of visual literacy standards in the curricula that informs teachers' practices in ELICOS and Government-funded language and literacy programs, could be a study that examines if and how visual literacy features in the programs undertaken by pre-service adult English language teachers. Such study might take the shape of an audit and an in-depth document analysis of curricula in teacher education programs, ranging from a four-week CELTA course to a two-year Master of TESOL. In addition, addressing the needs of in-service adult English language teachers, a similar research study of available professional development programs that address understanding of visual literacy, would be advantageous. Findings from studies of this nature could provide educators with the foundations and knowledge of visual literacy development needed to integrate these into instruction programs.

9.5 Final remarks

This study contributes to knowledge in the fields of visual literacy and adult ELT. In the visual literacy space, it offers the unique perspectives of English language teachers specialised in programs for adult migrants, refugees and overseas students in Australia. Similar to other studies which have explored the concept based on the idiosyncrasies of different disciplines, this study highlights the interpretations of professional ELT practitioners, who have the development of traditional language skills as their priority. From this point of view, the study contributes to adult ELT, as it challenges the perception that an adult English language learner with no written literacy or oracy might not be able to critically engage with and analyse a visual text, due to their limited ability to articulate their opinions in nuanced written or spoken ways. I argue that visual literacy is necessary for all adult learners of English to efficiently and holistically operate within demanding contexts, such as tertiary/vocational education and the workplace. Thus, comprehension, critical analysis and production of visual texts

needs to be included in adult ELT, not only as learning outcomes in curricula, but within the repertoire of essential 21st century competencies expected of and taught to English language learners.

Importantly, the findings uncovered the absence of streamlined strategies to assist the development of visual literacy in accredited ELICOS and Government-funded English language programs for adult migrants and refugees. Furthermore, findings revealed that pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development do not address visual literacy. Although all participants conceded that they rely on visual texts for pedagogical purposes, they do this instinctively and often tacitly, based on the demands of heavily prescriptive curricula, and on minimal training on how to systematically and effectively use visual texts in meaningful ways. This limitation signals the need to support teachers in their own understanding of visual literacy, in order to incorporate it in the adult English language classroom. This research gives teachers in ELICOS providers and Government-funded English language centres a voice in terms of their need to acquire knowledge on visual literacy and its practical applications. The participants in this study were interested in the subject; they saw it as important, but some had never heard of visual literacy prior to their interview. Visual literacy education must start at the teacher level.

The findings from this study are presented as a considered, intentional contribution to Australia's adult ELT. It is imperative to listen to what teachers have to say about their own knowledge and preparation for the job with regard to visual literacy. The study provides adult English language teachers themselves with an opportunity to reflect on their teaching, specifically regarding their own use of visual texts. It prompts them to ask themselves whether they are helping their learners to critically and meaningfully engage with a photograph, video or website chosen for a particular lesson, or if they are employing these visual texts as a last resort when written and spoken words fail to convey a message to their learners.

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APPENDIX 1. INVITATION LETTER TO SITE LEADERS

INVITATION TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE LEADERS Doctoral study – Informing pedagogic practice: Educators’ interpretations of visual literacy in adult English Language Teaching (ELT)

7 March 2016

Dear [name of site leader],

I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Monash University and I am conducting a doctoral research project in visual literacy in adult English language teaching. I am also an ELICOS teacher at Swinburne University and a Spanish tutor at RMIT. I am writing to ask for your authorisation to interview five to ten of your ELICOS teachers regarding their classroom practices. To be part of this study, I will invite each teacher to participate in a 45-60 minute one-on-one interview and a one hour focus group.

If agreeable, could you please indicate the best medium to send a brief invitation message to your teachers, so they can contact me directly if interested? Please see flyer attached. This may be placed on a notice board (physical or electronic) and/or sent via an institutional email or newsletter. According to Monash University’s Ethics Committee regulations I must refrain from asking you to invite your staff to participate, as this may be considered coercion.

Possible benefits to participants

At a time when we are constantly exposed to visual media messages through television, social media, websites, picture books, etc., a greater and/or improved understanding of the concept of visual literacy would benefit not only teachers, but their students. I intend to explore the extent to which colleagues in the adult ELT context integrate visual literacy into their classroom. The findings in this study may strengthen pedagogic practices in ELICOS education in Australia, by broadening teachers’ understanding of the strong links between viewing and the ‘traditional’ macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. In addition, documentation of current successful pedagogic approaches to visual literacy may generate positive changes in curriculum design and delivery in the ever-growing sector of Australia’s adult ESL education.

Risk, confidentiality and storage of data

I approach my research project with a spirit of collegiality and do not intend to pose any risk to the participants or their workplace, nor to expose them to social harm or distress. Data will be strictly restricted to the project research team and stored safely in locked filing cabinets and password-protected computers. As is the norm, the data will be destroyed after a period of five years. Participants and their institutions will remain anonymous in any reporting or publication of the research findings.

Learning from the curriculum

One of the aims of my research is to determine in which ways participating ELICOS providers address implicitly or explicitly the development of visual literacy in their curriculum. To achieve this, would it be possible to access [name of centre]’s curriculum? I will treat these documents with the utmost respect and in strict confidentiality.

If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact me or my thesis supervisors via the phone numbers or email addresses listed below.

Chief Investigator:
Assoc. Professor Janet Scull
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Monash University
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janet.scull@monash.edu

Co-supervisor:
Dr Miriam Faine
Faculty of Education
Monash University
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Co-supervisor:
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Faculty of Education
Monash University
9905 2837
katrina.tour@monash.edu

PhD candidate:
Andrés Villamizar-Maldonado
Faculty of Education
Monash University
0419 532 497
Andrés.villamizar@monash.edu

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards,



Andrés Villamizar-Maldonado

<https://au.linkedin.com/in/Andrésvillamizar>

APPENDIX 2. EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT TO ESL TEACHERS

Project Title: Informing pedagogic practice: Educators' interpretations of visual literacy in adult English Language Teaching (ELT)

4 April 2016

Dear [name of participant],

My name is Andrés Villamizar. I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Monash University and I am conducting a doctoral research project in visual literacy in adult ESL education. I am also an ELICOS teacher at Swinburne University and a Spanish tutor at RMIT. I would like to invite you to take part in this study. Before you decide whether or not to participate, please read this Explanatory Statement in full. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact me or my thesis supervisors via the phone numbers or email addresses listed below.

Chief Investigator: Assoc. Professor Janet Scull Faculty of Education Monash University 9905 2841 janet.scull@monash.edu	Co-supervisor: Dr Miriam Faine Faculty of Education Monash University 9905 2781 Miriam.faine@monash.edu	Co-supervisor: Dr Katrina Tour Faculty of Education Monash University 9905 2837 katrina.tour@monash.edu	PhD candidate: Andrés Villamizar-Maldonado Faculty of Education Monash University 0419 532 497 Andrés.villamizar@monash.edu
--	--	--	---

Why were you chosen for this research?

Your personal and professional experiences as a teacher in the ESL field will be invaluable in the completion of my study, which is aimed at contributing to the body of knowledge in adult ELT.

Aim of the study

I intend to explore the extent to which colleague teachers in the adult AMEP and ELICOS contexts integrate visual literacy into their ELT practice, by:

- Examining the participating teachers' understanding of the concept of visual literacy and the skill of viewing, with connections to the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking;
- Exploring and documenting efficient strategies with which ESL teachers can translate visual literacy in the curriculum into their classroom practices;
- Identifying the ways in which the development of visual literacy is addressed in the curricula.

Possible benefits of the study

At a time when we are constantly exposed to visual messages through television, social media, websites, picture books, etc., a greater and/or improved understanding of the concept of visual literacy would benefit not only teachers but their students. Greater knowledge in this area would contribute to providing learners with the skills to interpret still and moving images critically and meaningfully.

This study's findings may strengthen pedagogic practices in adult ESL education in Australia, by broadening teachers' understanding of the strong links between viewing and the 'traditional' macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. In addition, documentation of current successful pedagogic approaches to visual literacy in AMEP and ELICOS classrooms may generate positive changes in curriculum design and delivery in the ever-growing sector of Australia's adult education.

Participants' contribution

To be part of this study, I ask that you participate in a 30-40 minute one-on-one interview and a one hour focus group, held at a venue suitable to you. The interview will be audio-recorded and the focus group will be captured in video (as I will use visual materials). These recordings will be later transcribed for data

analysis. In addition, I may also ask you to provide a sample of visual resources you have used in your lessons.

Consenting to participate in the project, withdrawing and accessing results

Being part of this project is entirely voluntary. In order confirm your participation in this research, could you please sign and bring the consent form attached to our one-on-one interview? Please be advised that your involvement in this research study is completely voluntary. Prior to the focus group, you have the right to withdraw from further participation and no data from the interview will be used. At the end of this study a summary report will be emailed to all participants.

Risks, confidentiality and storage of data

I approach my research project with a spirit of collegiality and do not intend to pose any physical, psychological or spiritual risk to the participants or their workplace, nor to expose them to social harm or distress. Data will be strictly restricted to the project research team and stored safely in locked filing cabinets and password-protected computers. As is the norm, the data will be destroyed after a period of five years. Participants and their institutions will remain anonymous in any reporting or publication of the research findings.

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact:

Executive Officer

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Room 111, Building 3e, Research Office

Monash University VIC 3800 Tel: +61 3 9905 205 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +6139905 3831

What next?

I will contact you so we can arrange a suitable time to meet for the interview.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,



PhD candidate: Andrés Villamizar-Maldonado

<https://au.linkedin.com/in/Andrésvillamizar>

Chief Investigator: Assoc. Professor Janet Scull

Co-supervisor: Dr Katrina Tour

Co-supervisor: Dr Miriam Faine

APPENDIX 3. CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR ELICOS TEACHERS

Project Title: Informing pedagogic practice: Educators' interpretations of visual literacy in adult English Language Teaching (ELT)

Dear participant,

Please read this consent form and if you agree with all the information in it I will bring you a hard copy for you to sign when we meet for our one-on-one interview.

Chief Investigator:
Assoc. Professor Janet Scull
Faculty of Education
Monash University
9905 2841
janet.scull@monash.edu

Co-supervisor:
Dr Miriam Faine
Faculty of Education
Monash University
9905 2781
Miriam.faine@monash.edu

Co-supervisor:
Dr Katrina Tour
Faculty of Education
Monash University
9905 2837
katrina.tour@monash.edu

PhD candidate:
Andrés Villamizar-Maldonado
Faculty of Education
Monash University
0419 532 497
Andrés.villamizar@monash.edu

I have been invited to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
Audio recorded one-on-one interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video recoded focus group (of up to three teachers at the time)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of the de-identified data in thesis and publications (Names of participants/their work place will not be disclosed)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The collection of a sample of resources used in my classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would like to receive a copy of the research findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant _____

Email contact _____

Name of English Language Teaching Centre _____

Participant Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX 4. ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: CF15/4209 - 2015001782

Project Title: Informing pedagogic practice: Educators' interpretations of visual literacy in adult English Language Teaching (ELT)

Chief Investigator: Assoc Prof Janet Scull

Approved: From: 17 November 2015 To: 17 November 2020

Terms of approval - Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Mr Andrés Gabriel Villamizar Maldonado, Dr Miriam Faine

Monash University, Room 111, Chancellery Building E
24 Sports Walk, Clayton Campus, Wellington Rd
Clayton VIC 3800, Australia
Telephone: +61 3 9905 5490 Facsimile: +61 3 9905 3831
Email: muhrec@monash.edu <http://intranet.monash.edu.au/researchadmin/human/index.php>
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

APPENDIX 5. ENGLISH AUSTRALIA MEMBER COLLEGES

English Australia member colleges

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

ANU College
UC College English Language Centre (UCCELCLC)

New South Wales (NSW)

Ability English - Sydney
Academy of English - Blue Mountains
Academy of English - Sydney
Access Language Centre
ACU English Language Centre - North Sydney
Australia Onsong International College
Australian Institute of Professional Education
Australian International College of English
Australian Pacific College - Sydney (Clarence St)
Australian Pacific College - Sydney (Kent St)
Centre for English Teaching,
The University of Sydney
CQUniversity English Language Centre -
Sydney
EF International Language Schools
ELS Universal English College
ELSI Sydney
Embassy English - Sydney
English Language Company
Greenwich English College
ILSC Australia - Sydney
International House Sydney
Kaplan International English - Sydney City
Kaplan International English - Sydney - Manly
Kingsway Institute
Macquarie University English Language
Centre
Nan Tien Institute
Navitas English - Bondi
Navitas English - Manly
Navitas English - Sydney
North Coast Institute English Language
Centre - Kingscliff
NSW English Language Centre,
TAFE Hunter Institute - Newcastle
SELC Australia - Bondi
SELC Australia - Sydney City
Specialty Language Centre & Oxford College
of English
Strathfield College
Sydney College of English
TAFE English Language Centre (TELC) -
Meadowbank
TAFE International Education Centre (TIEC) -
Liverpool
TAFE NSW Sydney Institute English Centre
(SITEC)
Taylors College Sydney
THINK Education: Class
University of New England English Language
Centre

University of Newcastle Language Centre -
Newcastle
University of Newcastle Language Centre -
Sydney
UNSW Global Pty Ltd T/A Institute of
Languages
UOW College
UTS:INSEARCH
Western Sydney University, The College
Wollongong English Language & Cultural
Centre, TAFE Illawarra Institute

Northern Territory (NT)

Navitas English - Darwin

Queensland (QLD)

ACU English Language Centre - Brisbane
Bond University English Language Institute
Cairns Language Centre / Eurocentres Cairns
CQUniversity English Language Centre -
Brisbane
CQUniversity English Language Centre -
Rockhampton
Embassy English - Brisbane
Embassy English - Surfers Paradise
English Unlimited
Griffith English Language Institute - Brisbane
Griffith English Language Institute - Gold
Coast
ILSC Australia - Brisbane
Impact English College
Institute of Continuing & TESOL Education,
The University of Queensland (ICTE-UQ)
Kaplan International English - Brisbane
Kaplan International English - Cairns
Langports English Language College -
Brisbane
Langports English Language College -
Gold Coast
Lexis English - Brisbane
Lexis English - Noosa
Lexis English - Sunshine Coast
Navitas English - Brisbane
QUT International College
Serina Russo Institute
Shafton International College - Brisbane
Shafton International College - Gold Coast
Southbank Institute Language Centre
Whitsundays College of English SACE

South Australia (SA)

Bradford College
Centre for English Language in the University
of South Australia (CELUSA)
Eynesbury College Academy of English
Intensive English Language Institute

Kaplan International English - Adelaide
South Australian College of English
TAFE SA Adelaide English Language Centre
University of Adelaide English Language
Centre

Tasmania (TAS)

University of Tasmania English Language
Centre - Hobart
University of Tasmania English Language
Centre - Launceston

Victoria (VIC)

Ability English - Melbourne
Academia International
ACU English Language Centre - Melbourne
Australian National College of English
Chambers Institute
CQUniversity English Language Centre -
Melbourne
Deakin University English Language Institute
Discover English
ELSI Melbourne
Embassy English - Melbourne
Hawthorn-Melbourne
Holmes English Language Centre
Impact English College
INUS Australia - Education & Training
Kangan Institute
Kaplan International English - Melbourne
La Trobe Melbourne
Lyceum English Language Australia
Monash University English Language Centre
Oxford English Language Centre
RMIT English Worldwide
Swinburne University English Language
Centre
VU English

Western Australia (WA)

Australian English Language Centre
Centre for English Language Teaching,
The University of Western Australia
Curtin English
Kaplan International - Perth
Lexis English - Perth
Milner International College of English
Murdoch Language Centre,
Murdoch Institute of Technology
Navitas English - Perth
Perth International College of English
TAFE Western Australia - Bentley Campus
TAFE Western Australia - Perth Campus

English Australia
Level 3, 162 Goulburn Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010 AUSTRALIA

T: + 61 2 9264 4700
E: essec@englishaustralia.com.au
www.englishaustralia.com.au



APPENDIX 6. AMEP PROVIDERS

Screen shots of Department of Education and Department of Education and Training - Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) service providers. Retrieved 19 March 2015, from <https://www.education.gov.au/adult-migrant-english-program-service-providers>

Suburb	Address	Telephone
Ascot Vale	Wingate Avenue Community Centre Main AMEP Administration Building 13 A Wingate Avenue Ascot Vale VIC 3032	03 9376 5244
	Wingate Avenue Community Centre 125 Union Road Ascot Vale VIC 3032	
Ballarat	Federation University Ballarat Campus Corner Grant and Moyle Streets Ballarat VIC 3353	03 5327 8091
Bendigo	Bendigo TAFE Bendigo Campus 136 McCrae Street Campus Bendigo VIC 3552	03 5434 1933
Boronia	Outer Eastern Literacy Program Incorporated C/- Boronia Library Park Crescent Boronia VIC 3155 Managed by Mountain District Learning Centre Progress Hall 134 Boronia Road Boronia VIC 3155	03 9762 4211
Box Hill	AMES Australia Box Hill 34-36 Prospect Street Box Hill VIC 3128	03 9890 0425
Broadmeadows	Melbourne Polytechnic- Broadmeadows Corner of Belfast and Blair Streets	03 9269 1400

	Pearcedale Parade Broadmeadows VIC 3047	
Carlton	Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre Incorporated 20 Princes Street North Carlton VIC 3054	03 9347 7072
Chadstone	Waverley Adult Literacy Program Inc 34 Amaroo Street Chadstone VIC 3148	03 9807 2322
Chadstone	Holmesglen Institute of TAFE Chadstone Campus Corner Batesford and Warragul Roads Chadstone VIC 3148	03 9564 1978
Cheltenham	Cheltenham Community Centre 8 Chesterville Road Cheltenham VIC 3192	03 8541 9777
Cobram	Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GO TAFE) 43-45 Punt Road Cobram VIC 3644	03 5833 2609
Coburg	Moreland Adult Education 344 Sydney Road Coburg VIC 3058	03 9383 7943
Cranbourne North	Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre 141-147 Endeavour Drive Cranbourne North VIC 3977	03 5996 9056
Croydon	Swinburne University Croydon Campus 12-50 Norton Road Croydon VIC 3136	03 9726 1618
Dandenong	AMES Australia Dandenong	03 8791 2401

APPENDIX 7. RECRUITMENT POSTER

EAL TEACHERS WANTED

to participate in a research project on educators' interpretations of visual literacy in adult English Language Teaching (ELT)



I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, ELICOS teacher at Swinburne and Spanish tutor at RMIT. I am investigating the extent to which colleague teachers in the adult ESL context integrate visual literacy and the skill of viewing into their English language teaching practice. Your personal and professional experiences as a teacher in the ESL field will be invaluable in the completion of my study.

Would you help with 45-60 minutes of your time for a one-on-one interview and possibly a one hour focus group of up to three teachers? These will both take place at a time and place that suit you. If you are interested in participating, please contact me on the details below by Friday 20 May 2016.

Andrés Villamizar-Maldonado

PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, Monash University

Phone: 0419 532 497

email: Andrés.villamizar@monash.edu

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX 8. DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE

Timeframe	Recruitment/data collection activity	Response
Week 1 March 2016	First round of five invitations to site leaders	Two responses, both favourable
Week 3 March 2016	Second round of invitations to site leaders	Two additional favourable responses
Week 1 April 2016	Third round of invitations to site leaders	One last favourable response
Weeks 2 – 4 April 2016	Nine one-on-one interviews	Engaged and enthusiastic, referred colleagues
Weeks 1 – 4 May 2016	Six additional interviews	Engaged and enthusiastic
Weeks 2 – 4 July 2016	Negotiation of time and place for focus groups	Participants keen but logistics were complex
Week 1 August	First focus group (four participants) – ELICOS	Engaged and reflective
Week 4 August 2016	Second group (four participants) – Government funded EAL programs	Engaged and reflective
Week 2 October	Five site leaders contacted for access to curriculum documents	Three responses, two favourable

APPENDIX 9. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Warm up questions – to build rapport with the participants and find out more about their experiences as adult English language teachers

- a. What do you currently teach? What levels? General English/English for Academic Purposes/IELTS preparation? What sorts of students do you have? (Ages, background)
- b. How did you come to be an English language teacher?
- c. How long have you been teaching EAL?
- d. What aspects of your role as an EAL teacher do you enjoy the most?
- e. What would you say is your teaching style?
- f. What would you consider your strengths are in your teaching practice? What areas would you be interested in learning more about and/or improving?

Concept questions

1. In simple terms, what is your understanding of literacy?
2. What is visual literacy?
3. What links would you say there are between visual literacy and the more traditionally observed skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking?
4. What importance would you give to visual literacy in the context of adult ELT?

Questions about the participants' education

Lead in: What training did you undertake in order to become an EAL teacher?

5. To what extent would you say your training included visual literacy and using images in the classroom? Was there a subject/module/workshop that addressed what types of images should be used or strategies to use them?
6. Could you think of other personal or professional experiences (e.g. professional development sessions, conferences, mentoring, on the job learning) that have assisted your ability to use images in your English language teaching?

Questions about current practices

7. What types of materials do you use in your classroom? How often would you say you use (still or moving) images in your lessons? For what purpose? (Participants might pre-empt: To what extent would you say using images may add value to your lessons?)
8. Can you think of types of images you have used in the past? How have you incorporated these images into your lesson? (Participants might pre-empt: How would you say using these images helped in that particular lesson?)
9. What criteria do you use to evaluate an image to use in your lesson? (Think of your learners' socio-cultural and educational background, as well as literacy in their first language). What makes this particular image appropriate for your lesson?
10. How can you tell your students understand a certain image? How do you know they get it?
11. What opportunities do your students have to express their ideas through images? Is this part of their regular tasks?

APPENDIX 10. PARTICIPANTS' CHOSEN VISUAL TEXTS

ELICOS focus group's visual representations of the word 'community'

Georgie



Jacob



Kylie



Mercedes



Government-funded EAL focus group's visual representations of the word 'community'

Jenny



Lili



Lourdes



Winnifred



APPENDIX 11. FOCUS GROUPS QUESTIONS

First, upon observing each of the pictures the participants found online:

- What's going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Following this initial discussion about the visual representations, I asked:

1. Why did you select this particular image to represent 'community'?
2. Is this image a literal, metaphoric or aesthetic representation of the word 'community'?
3. If you were to use this image in your teaching, what would your students need to understand or what knowledge would they need to have in order to be able to engage with this image?

APPENDIX 12. INITIAL CODES

Code	Description/participant comment
1.	Literacy as the ability to read and write
2.	Literacy as the ability to control, use and function well in any communicative form or language for want or better purposes
3.	Visual literacy as the use of images to interpret meaning
4.	Visual literacy as an introduction to the culture
5.	Visual literacy comes into play a lot/it's important
6.	Visual literacy is extremely important in reading
7.	Visual literacy is present when there are multimodal/multimedia/audio-visual materials
8.	Visual literacy as top-down skills, not just looking at the pictures but at the whole text
9.	Viewing materials as additional/supporting/extension
10.	Visual literacy as the ability to read and interpret anything that isn't words and you make meaning from
11.	Visual literacy includes body language
12.	Visual literacy is hugely important
13.	Visual literacy as a preamble to written and spoken content - to set the context
14.	Visual literacy is how we see the world initially
15.	Visual literacy helps people adapt to the local culture and lifestyle
16.	Uses slides as visual aids
17.	Does not use slides/blows up pictures
18.	Uses visuals to explain a reading text step by step
19.	Uses visuals as well as words side by side
20.	Some people engage with information usually better. They see the word and hear it
21.	Uses images to replace long vocabulary definitions
22.	Uses images in the classroom all the time/every day
23.	Image quality and convenience are very important
24.	Meta-language
25.	Considers different races and ethnic backgrounds in materials - Cultural sensitivity
26.	Considers political sensitivities as a criterion for selecting images
27.	Thinks about different genders in images
28.	Thinks about different types of clothing depicted in images
29.	Images should be interesting/attractive
30.	Sees the role of images as an instrument to engage students with content
31.	Expresses own perception about the literacy and abilities of a particular group of students
32.	Images need to be literal, so students don't get confused
33.	Uses concept checking questions to ensure students understand an image
34.	Body language acts as feedback that the students understand
35.	Students get some opportunities to produce images
36.	Students do NOT get opportunities to produce images
37.	Believes that the future of education is moving on to technology
38.	Believes colour is essential in teaching
39.	Does my image lead the learner towards the goal I have set for my lesson's aims?
40.	Sometimes images are used impromptu
41.	Believes colour is essential in printed textbooks
42.	Visual literacy depends on what is actually being viewed
43.	Visual literacy is introductory to reading and writing
44.	Visual literacy is free and intrinsic. Once you add language to it, you add an extra layer and it becomes analysing
45.	Visual literacy stands alone from language
46.	If you are looking at something you need language to describe it
47.	Visual literacy depends on technology in the classroom
48.	Using images depends on available technology in the classroom
49.	Use of different visuals (still/moving) for different levels (lower or higher)
50.	Uses humour through visuals

51.	Affect - How students feel when a teacher uses a certain image
52.	Teaching viewing/visual literacy may be seen as a threat to some teachers who don't know how to
53.	Visual literacy is learning from observing
54.	Visual literacy is not so explicit
55.	When choosing an image this has to be appealing to the teacher first
56.	Uses games and kinaesthetic learning in teaching
57.	Visual literacy is linked to prior experiences
58.	Visual literacy crosses cultures
59.	Visual literacy is an equaliser. Everyone can partake
60.	How you view an image is dependent on the context that you see it in
61.	Colours evoke emotions
62.	Images need to be appropriate for adults
63.	Examples of literacy
64.	Uses video
65.	Viewing is picking up patterns and noticing difference
66.	Viewing is passive
67.	Visual literacy in the curriculum

APPENDIX 13. CODEBOOK MAPPED TO THE OPERATIONAL, CULTURAL, CRITICAL AND AFFECTIVE DIMENSIONS

Code	Description/participant comment	Dimension
Literacy as reading and writing		
1	Literacy as the ability to read and write	Operational
Literacy beyond reading and writing		
2	Literacy as the ability to control, use and function well in any communicative form or language for want or better purposes	Operational
10	Visual literacy as the ability to read and interpret anything that isn't words and you make meaning from	Critical
9	Visual literacy as the use of images to interpret meaning	Critical
Visual literacy in relation to culture		
4	Visual literacy as an introduction to the culture	Cultural/ Critical
22	Visual literacy helps people adapt to the local culture and lifestyle	Cultural
20	Visual literacy is how we see the world initially	Critical
57	Visual literacy is linked to prior experiences	Cultural
13	Visual literacy as top-down skills, not just looking at the pictures but at the whole text	Operational /Critical
42	Visual literacy depends on what is actually being viewed	Critical
53	Visual literacy is learning from observing	Critical
60	How you view an image is dependent on the context that you see it in	Cultural / Critical
59	Visual literacy is an equaliser. Everyone can partake	Critical
65	Viewing is picking up patterns and noticing difference	Critical
58	Visual literacy crosses cultures	Cultural
Visual literacy as an essential skill		
3	Visual literacy comes into play a lot/it's important	Affective
6	Visual literacy is extremely important in reading	Operational
7	Visual literacy is hugely important	Affective
15	Uses images in the classroom all the time/every day	Operational
Visual literacy to support reading and writing		
5	Viewing materials as additional/supporting/extension	Operational
8	Visual literacy as a preamble to written and spoken content - to set the context	Operational
43	Visual literacy is introductory to reading and writing	Operational
12	Uses visuals to explain a reading text step by step	Operational
19	Uses visuals as well as words side by side	Operational
Visual literacy linked to technology		
18	Visual literacy is present when there are multimodal/multimedia/audio-visual materials	Operational
37	Believes that the future of education is moving on to technology	Operational
47	Visual literacy depends on technology in the classroom	Operational
48	Using images depends on available technology in the classroom	Operational
24	Uses slides as visual aids	Operational
25	Does not use slides/blows up pictures	Operational

64	Uses video	Operational
Visual texts to better engage students		
14	Some people engage with information usually better. They see the word and hear it	Critical / Cultural /Affective
21	Uses images to replace long vocabulary definitions	Operational
30	Sees the role of images as an instrument to engage students with content	Cultural / Operational
Visual text use considers gender, race and culture		
17	Considers different races and ethnic backgrounds in materials - Cultural sensitivity	Critical
26	Considers political sensitivities as a criterion for selecting images	Critical
27	Thinks about different genders in images	Critical
28	Thinks about different types of clothing depicted in images	Critical
Visual text use based on appeal		
29	Images should be interesting/attractive	Affective
55	When choosing an image this has to be appealing to the teacher first	Affective
62	Images need to be appropriate for adults	Critical/Cultural
23	Image quality and convenience are very important	Operational
51	Affect - How students feel when a teacher uses a certain image	Affective
52	Teaching viewing/visual literacy may be seen as a threat to some teachers who don't know how to	Affective
54	Visual literacy is not so explicit	Critical
Visual text use based on elements of design		
38	Believes colour is essential in teaching	Cultural/Affective
41	Believes colour is essential in printed textbooks	Cultural/Affective
51	Colours evoke emotions	Cultural/Affective
Visual text use based on teacher's objectives/purpose		
39	Does my image lead the learner towards the goal I have set for my lesson's aims?	Critical
40	Sometimes images are used impromptu	Operational
Visual text use based on language ability		
31	Expresses own perception about the literacy and abilities of a particular group of students	Critical /Affective
49	Use of different visuals (still/moving) for different levels (lower or higher)	Operational/Critical / Cultural
32	Images need to be literal, so students don't get confused	Operational
Visual literacy as understanding visual texts		
33	Uses concept checking questions to ensure students understand an image	Operational / Critical
21A	Body language acts as feedback that the students understand	Operational / Critical
11	Visual literacy includes body language	Cultural
Communicating through visual texts		
35	Students get some opportunities to produce images	Operational
36	Students do NOT get opportunities to produce images	Operational
63	Examples of literacy	Operational
67	Visual literacy in the curriculum	Operational
Visual literacy linked to language ability		
66	Viewing is passive	Critical

44	Visual literacy is free and intrinsic. Once you add language to it, you add an extra layer and it becomes analysing	Critical
45	Visual literacy stands alone from language	Critical / Cultural
46	If you are looking at something you need language to describe it	Critical
Odd ones		
16	Meta-language	Critical
50	Uses humour through visuals	AFFECTIVE/ Critical
56	Uses games and kinaesthetic learning in teaching	Operational

APPENDIX 14. SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT 1: INTERVIEW WITH LOLA

Andrés: Thank you so much for your time today. Thank you for your interest in being part of my research project. Let's start by getting to know you a little bit, to know you and your practice. What do you currently teach? What levels? Is it general English or is it for academic purposes or IELTS, or what sort of students do you have?

Lola: Okay. This summer they called me in to teach because they were low on teachers and I taught advanced plus then. I think that's a good example of what I have been teaching in the last few years. I've been focusing more on higher level teaching and more academic-focused courses. Upper intermediate, advanced and advanced plus students, academic-focused students, and I would say previously it was very much a mixed bag of all levels. It's been in the last five years I've been working in an academic context.

Andrés: That advanced intermediate, what IELTS equivalent would that be?

Lola: If you were a level seven then you're at an IELTS six.

Andrés: Okay. That's advanced intermediate?

Lola: That's advanced plus.

Andrés: Okay.

Lola: Yeah, that would be the highest before they can go. Here they do advanced plus and then go into a master's.

Andrés: Okay.

Lola: They're prepared to do a masters. By the time they're done they have the score that makes it capable for them to go into a master's program or a bachelor's if that's what they're doing.

Andrés: What are their ages and background?

Lola: I would say primarily here in Australia we get a lot of students from China. Age ranges, although I would say I've had some of my older students here, students who were close to my age as well. We also get a lot of students from Saudi Arabia. Then I have very mixed classroom as well, quite a few Cambodian students, Vietnamese, I've had Albanian students, Colombian, Brazilian students as well. It's been a mix but the majority I would say are from China and Saudi Arabia.

Andrés: How did you come to be an English language teacher?

Lola: It's interesting. I will not lie and say my heart was to be a teacher. I would say it had to do with traveling. I was working in New York, where I'm from, and I was doing a lot of traveling at the time when I was in my early 20s, and I was trying to think about ways I could stay in a place for a longer period of time. When I was in Brazil I met someone and they said they had done a CELTA and I asked them what a CELTA was. They told me it was an intensive course they did over a month that gave them the ability to teach English in Brazil. I said sign me up.

Andrés: So, you did your CELTA in Brazil?

Lola: I didn't do it in Brazil. I ended up doing my CELTA in Budapest because it was the cheapest course, I wanted to a European road trip, so I turned it into a whole holiday as well. That was now a decade ago. It was something that happened accidentally and then I realised how much I enjoyed it and that I was good at it. It ended up working out really well.

Andrés: You were just about enter into my next question which is what aspects of your role as a teacher do you enjoy the most? Apart from getting to see the world.

Lola: Yeah, the part that has nothing to do with the teaching I would say definitely it allows me to use on a daily basis the creativity that maybe I had wanted to use in other fields and ended up not being able to use. I love the possibility of throwing a lesson together and seeing what happens in the classroom. I also like the need to be able to think on my toes. For example, something comes in the classroom, a student poses something to you, and I think that's something you get better with over time. At first I would just be a deer in headlights and not know how to answer and not know how to deal with not knowing how to answer. I think eventually learned all the little tricks of the trade, and that it's okay to say, 'I'm going to look that up and I'll get back to you'. Now it's even better because they have iPhones.

Andrés: Cool. You said that this was about a decade ago. How long have you been teaching English as a second language in total and how long ELICOS?

Lola: English I would say...I'm trying to do the math in my head right now.

Andrés: Roughly.

Lola: I would say...It's going to be eight years, and then ELICOS...I would say ELICOS...I worked in Vietnam before here, I was teaching the same curriculum as here, I'm very inspired to rewrite it. I've been in ELICOS between here and there for...It's been two years here...Five years.

Andrés: Cool. Then my next question is not based on what we learned from the books either at CELTA or another course, what the teaching chapters in a book or teaching styles. This is about you. What would you say is your teaching style like?

Lola: I would say I'm usually the jokey teacher, but I'm also...My students always know that, that can come along...The fun part can always be present and be there as long as we get done what needs to be done. I would say I like to treat my students as adults. I think sometimes there's this authority figure or power play going on in some classrooms. I don't think that is happening in my classrooms.

Andrés: Power play between the students and the teacher or among the students?

Lola: I like the environment in my class to be...I like it if someone looks in the classroom window and they can't find me in the classroom because I'm sitting down with the students, I'm interactive. I like to interact with them as much as possible. I get down and I listen to them and I try to communicate. Not interfere but be there, guiding them and working with them. I enjoy a friendly fun rapport. I can't do rigid, I can't do that. Anything that gets stale for me...My teaching, if I do the same thing over and over it becomes stale for me and then it becomes stale for them I think. I like to keep it constantly evolving and just interactive and dynamic.

Andrés: With that comes the extra time and preparation I suppose.

Lola: I don't know. There's certain, I would say...I get into a routine. It doesn't take me a long time to plan. I don't know if I should admit that.

Andrés: It's okay.

Lola: I get in certain activities that I know I can...Even if I'm not doing the same thing I know and I bend certain activities so that I go, okay, this is how I'm going to approach this, and I know I can work around that. I'm not one of those people who sits in front of a piece of paper and maps out how long things will take and how...I haven't written a plan I think...It's been a very long time.

Andrés: You have the experience to back that up.

Lola: Yeah. I have a bit now. Yeah.

Andrés: Speaking of experience, what would you consider your strengths are in your teaching practice? On the other side of the coin, what areas would you be interested in learning more about and/or improving?

Lola: I would say strengths, some of the things I already mentioned. I think I have a good ability to bring imagination to the students because I put creativity into the things I make. We have a curriculum here that we can use, but I feel my opinion is you never remember a teacher with the book that they taught from, you remember how they did certain activities and how things played out in class. I think that aspect is my strength, the creativity involved in it.

I would say things that I can probably learn more about, I think I'm a bit of a technophobe in some ways. I know there's a lot of valuable tools out there that I am a bit resistant to.

Andrés: For example?

Lola: I personally don't have a Facebook or a Twitter account.

Andrés: Okay.

Lola: I don't really know how to tell students they can use it for themselves. I think that is something that is definitely...It's the direction that things are going and I think my resistance to it...I'll probably need to be a little bit more flexible because I'm sure there's many ways they can use that stuff to improve their English.

Andrés: Texts are changing, right?

Lola: Yeah, definitely. It's definitely in that area where there are gaps for me.

Andrés: Okay, thank you for that. Now that I know you a little bit better, I would like to ask you a few questions about literacy in itself. Again these aren't questions about knowledge, they're about what you construe, what you think when I ask you about certain things.

Lola: Okay.

Andrés: The first one is, in simple terms, what's your understanding of literacy?

Lola: I would say just being able on a very basic term to read and write. But, not just read like you can read the words out loud on the page, but the words conjure up meaning for you and you can interpret them internally in a way that means something to you. There's not just hollow.

Andrés: They're not just letters pushed together.

Lola: Yeah, exactly. They represent much more, hopefully.

Andrés: Yeah. Some students can read aloud very clearly.

Lola: Yeah, but it's just going into one ear and out the other.

Andrés: Now, what would you say visual literacy is?

Lola: Visual literacy? In what context?

Andrés: In our context, in English language teaching. You can take a moment if you like to think about that.

Lola: I'm not sure what you mean.

Andrés: That's what I want to find out from you.

Lola: Open interpretation?

Andrés: Let me try and give you a bit more context.

Lola: Okay.

Andrés: Usually, when we say literacy skills, what are we talking about? Reading, writing, listening and speaking. When I say visual literacy, what comes to mind?

Lola: Okay. I would say with that I think when you look at something, for example, do you ask yourself questions? Are the students...What are they seeing? How do they look at something? How do you know or how can you test something like that? I'm not sure how to answer that question.

Lola: To me there's so many things that can be viewed. First we do the skill of viewing, okay, are you viewing interactions? Are you viewing a movie? Are you viewing something that is happening in the streets? For me, visual literacy would depend on what was actually being viewed.

Andrés: And what links would you say there are visual literacy and the more traditionally observed skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking? That is in our context of English language teaching.

Lola: Okay. I would say, probably, it depends on what is going through your head. I think it's possible to view something without language interfering. Maybe it's free of language, visual literacy. Unless you're viewing and analysing in your head and then you're adding an extra layer to it. I would say it's something more intrinsic to us, it's free compared to...Once you put language into it then it becomes analysis and you're changing what you're viewing. It's a philosophical thing when you look at it. It's the minute you start to talk about what you're looking at, you have altered what it is in reality.

Andrés: Interesting.

Lola: There are theories on that. That's the whole idea of being in the now is when you're just experiencing something, it's without language, without thought. Then the minute you bring the language in you have changed the moment.

Andrés: What language, right? If English is not my first language, what language am I thinking on?

Lola: I don't know. For me, for a person who speaks only very poor Spanish, I don't know what the experience is like for someone who can switch between languages a little bit more freely. I always joked with my students when you dream, what language do you dream in?

Andrés: That's funny. I've said to my students, 'When you dream in English is when you know you're learning it'.

Lola: Yeah, exactly. When you're having nightmares, especially in English we're really getting into your head.

Andrés: Thank you very much for that.

Lola: Sure.

Andrés: Now the icing on the cake.

Lola: Okay, more complicated question.

Andrés: I'm sorry these are complicated.

Lola: No, it's making me...It's interesting because it's making me think.

Andrés: I'm glad. I had to think to actually come up with them.

Lola: Okay.

Andrés: So, to recap, how would you define visual literacy?

Lola: It feels more stand-alone, I don't know. I'm not even sure anymore.

Andrés: I'm just interested in what comes to mind.

Lola: Okay. To me it feels again a little bit more separate from language. Again, coming back to that catch-22, is where the minute I try to...If you're looking at something you would need language to describe it. I'm going in a cycle.

Andrés: Maybe they're linked?

Lola: Okay, hopefully. Hopefully I'm onto something.

Andrés: Let's think of that cycle and visual literacy again. What importance would you place on visual literacy in our context of English language teaching?

Lola: Okay. I don't know. For me, for example, if you were showing me this it would probably be easier for me to absorb than just text.

Andrés: If I were showing you these questions?

Lola: If you had, for example, even when we're doing our writing process, we have to get up and we rearrange things in a way that we can see it, instead of just on a piece of paper. A lot of times when something is explained to me I don't get it, but when I visualise it in whatever way...

Andrés: If you can see nouns in yellow, verbs in blue, adjectives in red?

Lola: With writing, which is not exactly classroom related, we were running through how we wanted these threads to work in our new course book for writing strategies or reading strategies, for example. We had to colour code them because it was easier for us to work in that way, to see reading was green, listening was yellow. It just made us able to see how everything fit together in an easier way, if that makes any sense. Definitely for me, personally I feel if I am to learn something I have to do it. I'm definitely a doer. If that is not an option then I have to see it being done or see it in some form depending on whatever it is. Hearing some explain or reading in a book doesn't work for me. It could but it takes a lot longer.

Andrés: Right. Thank you very much for that.

Lola: Yeah, okay.

Andrés: We're back to you now.

Lola: Okay, something I know about.

Andrés: We're back to you and your practice. What materials do you use in your classroom and how often would you say that you use them and for what purpose?

Lola: Okay. Not visual materials or anything?

Andrés: Sorry. Yeah, I should explain. What visual material, whether this is something that moves, something still?

Lola: Sure, yeah. I definitely, especially thinking about lower level students, for me I like to milk it a lot. It's much easier for me to fall on the floor and then embarrass myself. For me at a lower level, my body is my visual tool for a lot of things. I turn into a mime.

Images as well, sometimes you might want to draw with more language, or you can...Especially now...When I first started teaching, having a computer in the classroom wasn't always an option.

Andrés: That's right.

Lola: Now you can Google something, you project it, you go, "That's an armadillo", and we move on. Let's not focus on a thing that's not that important. Definitely pictures for certain vocabulary, body language for other vocabulary gets things through. Definitely using that for lower levels.

Then when you get to higher levels it's much more video-oriented things. In my level seven classes, for example, I like using TED Talks and things like that. YouTube is a very valuable tool.

Andrés: Are these videos just image or there is audio as well?

Lola: It could be a mixture sometimes. It depends. We have two weeks about health in advanced plus here. I was finding students just didn't know how a contagion could be passed around. It was very easy...There was a video that we found, the language was useless, it moved so quick that students couldn't understand it, but actually seeing it allowed them to figure out the language. Even though they couldn't hear it they could fill in the blanks based on the visuals. It's diagrammed and there was all these animated things moving around. It was actually just the image that gave them the language that they couldn't hear. I thought that was interesting. It could be a mixture of both depending on what I'm using it for.

Andrés: How often would you use images and what value do they add to your lesson?

Lola: I would say probably every class even if it's just briefly. I just think for students, if you're just a face in front of the students a lot of times it could be a bit dull for one. Also, again, if people are like me and they're not making the connection with what I'm saying and I'm talking too much or too long, if I can show something to them I think it always makes it easier for them to get it much faster.

Andrés: Thank you for that. And, when you do use visuals, what criteria do you use to evaluate an image that you're going to use in your lesson? Think of your learners and what makes this particular image appropriate for your lesson?

Lola: Yeah, there's a lot of things we have to consider here. There's cultural sensitivity sometimes. There's things that I would think are funny but may not be appropriate for the classroom. We teach students about presenting and having professional PowerPoints when they present and all that. Then I totally break all those rules. I tend to...again, it's the humour. We're teaching something so dry, for example it's paraphrasing and citing, and then they happen to be sceptical, there as an image of a dog that looks not sure why he's paraphrasing. It's very childish in a way but every time it gets a smile from the students and those who are starting to get distracted they come back to whatever it is that we're doing. I think that's a useful way.

I always got the sense that they felt that you could connect with them in a way. Again, you'll have people in class of all ages and there might be, for example, a 35-year-old in the class that thinks I'm immature at some points, and then there's the 20-year-old that goes 'This person is not so out of reach to me'. It has varying degrees.

It depends on the seriousness of the issue as well. Obviously if it's not a humorous issue, there may not be humour in it. For me it's more to break up if something is dry but it has to be done. It's a way of making it a little bit more engaging and interesting.

Andrés: Okay. Thank you very much for that.

Lola: Yeah, sorry, I answer questions in whirly whirls.

Andrés: Don't worry. It is all part of the tapestry that is going to help my research, and I am very grateful for all of that.

Lola: My thinking is making my headband slowly pop off my head.

Andrés: How can you tell that your students understand a certain image? How do you know they get it?

Lola: Is there a way to understand an image though? I don't know, it's really...That's, again, I might be reading too deep and too philosophically into that because I'm thinking on a level where no matter if I show a picture of ice cream and you and I will...If all I'm trying to get the student to go is 'That's ice cream', great. Then there's a lot of other layers to it.

Once the images get more complex, if it's a complicated scene, for example...I'm trying to think of an example. I think we had, I remember in my little six class, we had to use social media and I was using at the time how in Egypt they were using social media to unite and get attention and meet in places. We were doing that topic in class. It was interesting for in that context now we have an image which was a video and the reaction is different now. Some people are going 'That's great, that helped those gain freedom'.

Then others having a different perspective and going 'They're rebelling against their government'. That is obviously creating more...It's more controversial, it's creating more discussion. It's hard for me. Images are so easily interpreted in different ways by different people.

Andrés: Everyone comes with baggage.

Lola: Yeah. I think on a very basic sense, if I hold this up to you trying to get vocabulary to someone and they say 'mobile phone', okay, we're successful here. If I'm trying to create more of a discussion, that's...Maybe that is the point of the image. It's not for us to agree on anything it's just for...Okay, getting the language out. What do you think about this situation and what do you think? Just to create the actual discussion involved.

Andrés: Thank you so much for this.

Lola: Sure.

Andrés: Now, your students, what opportunities do they have to express their ideas through images in your work?

Lola: Okay?

Andrés: What chances do they have to express ideas through images and if they do these, is this part of their regular tasks?

Lola: Okay. I would say it's...I don't think there's a lot of variety though. Definitely when they present, especially in the higher levels, they're frequently using PowerPoint or Prezi to do so. They, without fail, include images that have to do with their topic. They're using it in that situation. Aside from that I can't really think of too many other examples unless, for example, we ask them to research something occasionally and they might be showing each other stuff on their phone.

Andrés: Okay. From Google Images?

Lola: Yeah. Other than that it's not...I can't think of many other examples where they provide the image.

Andrés: Do you have people who draw in your classroom?

Lola: I do. But, in six and seven they become much more academic focused, but for example in five and even down to level three, they have to...Let's just go down to pre-intermediate, they have to design an innovative product. It entails them a visual format for it. Without fail there's a pattern, we always notice a pattern. If drawing is involved in some activity, the student who is the drawer will turn off language and will not communicate and will be involved in that.

Andrés: Right.

Lola: They use it as an escape method to get away from the communication of the activity.

Andrés: Doing what they love, drawing.

Lola: Yeah. A loner activity and then that's what they want...That's how they can express themselves as well. They go toward that. We also have in six and seven...I totally forgot about it, we have them keep response journals. It's just a place for them to be able to...write what they think

about the ideas, it could be based on their own personal experience or something else that they learned about the topic. We tell students they are to summarise, but they don't have to summarise in words if they don't want to. They can, for example, use...They can draw and a lot of students will. Instead of doing a written formal summary or bullet points or diagrams, some students will draw their interpretation of it.

Andrés: Cool.

Lola: Then of course they have to respond to it as well. They have to think about the image. A lot of them like to do it in a visual way. It's amazing how talented so many of them are.

Andrés: So many future designers.

Lola: Totally. A lot of our...We have a lot of students who are going into design in some format, whether it's web design or engineering. That is there. I think the thing with drawing in the class a lot of the students...If they can draw something they pull away from the language. That's often the issue with it. We noticed with the task throughout, it goes from lower levels to higher levels, again if they have to visually represent something in not a PowerPoint, the ones that have the ability of drawing will turn off their English.

Andrés: What you're saying is they'll compose a really nice image but not enough text to go with it?

Lola: It's not necessarily text that needs to be involved but often it's meant to be more of a collaboration.

Andrés: Right.

Lola: For example, let's say the design a product task that they have to do, they are supposed to be planning the product together and talking about the features, because they have to do a sales pitch for the product. The ones that feel more confident speaking, they end up taking the role of putting together what they're going to say. That person will do presentation but they'll be doing the ideas for them. You're going to be saying this and they'll go 'yeah, ok'.

Andrés: In the meantime the drawer is home alone doing the design?

Lola: Interacting in class and you can see that person ends up over the piece of paper and the ones involved are getting the actual pitch side of the equation ready. It does often happen where that person...If that's what they're into they don't want to do the collaboration part of it. It's hard to get all four of them doing the drawing and all four of them doing the collaborating on what the presentation will be, because some of them are stronger at drawing and some of them are stronger at speaking. It's just a natural way of things working out I think.

Andrés: That sounds like an awesome task to watch. I'd love to see that one day. Thank you very much for that.

Lola: Sure.

Andrés: The final two questions are about...I'm just going to ask if you remember a few things from your studies.

Lola: Okay.

Andrés: Could you remind me what training did you undertake to become an ELICOS teacher?

Lola: I did a CELTA.

Andrés: This was after you did a BFA, right?

Lola: Yes, I did a BFA in film. I worked for a few years and didn't really particularly enjoy it. I was also a bartender as well, which was nothing to do with anything. Then I did a CELTA a few years ago. I did...It was called Continue On, I did a certificate in tertiary in teaching and learning while I was in Vietnam.

Andrés: Okay.

Lola: Really I haven't followed through with more education except for more informal things and professional development.

Andrés: I'll get to that in a second, personal development.

Lola: Yeah.

Andrés: In your training, let's see the CELTA or the tertiary or both, to what extent would you say that this training included visual literacy or using images in the classroom? Can you think of a subject or a module or a workshop that addressed what type of image should be used or strategies to be used in more visual literacy?

Lola: I think going back to my CELTA is the only time where they said 'visual things are your friend in the classroom'. The whole teacher talking time, they told me to not talk. Coming from my experience before where my reaction would be to over explain everything, it was very hard for me to get into the mind frame where less is more. They were saying 'If you're especially teaching vocabulary it's a tool for teaching vocabulary, if it's something that can be represented visually, do it in that way'.

I remember my first time I had to teach for my CELTA, you do the little 20-minute classes, and in Budapest they have student volunteers who come in, they know they can come for free and you're not a real teacher yet and you don't know what you're doing. You have your supervisor assessing you as this is happening and your other CELTA compadres over there as well. I remember my lesson was for a pre-intermediate class and I had to teach vocabulary of hobbies. I remember creating with a piece of thread...Fishing was one thing I was trying to represent. I had cut out...I had drawn a fish and cut it out, taped a piece of thread onto the fish, and then re-enacted in class. Threw the thread in and then it stuck to the fish and I pulled the fish in. That was my way of representing it. That was really fun to me. It was a little bit actory in a way. I was like, okay, this could be a lot of fun. I tend to use my body a lot.

Andrés: This was encouraged and fostered in your CELTA?

Lola: Yeah. They said definitely if you can show it, it's always better, especially for a lower level student. Trying to explain to a student with very little vocabulary something with more vocabulary is going about it in a very convoluted way. We were told if you can express it, and if it doesn't take an hour for you to express it in a visual way...It's not a game of charades. If they don't get it there comes a point where you have to move on and say 'Maybe look at it in your dictionary at this point', or do whatever it is that needs to be done. Definitely they encouraged us to be visual about especially vocabulary.

Andrés: Did the term visual literacy come about, do you think?

Lola: I don't think I have ever heard that until I met you.

Andrés: Welcome to visual literacy!

My last question is a follow one from that. Can you think of any other personal or professional experiences that have assisted your ability to use visual images and/or your concept of visual literacy? This can be PD sessions, conferences, mentoring, on the job learning...Can you think of things that have assisted you in that?

Lola: There's been, especially in Vietnam we had quite regular professional development. At that time I was much less educated and experienced. We had two-tiered teachers there and we had the educators, and then instructors were what we were when first hired.

Andrés: Right.

Lola: The educators, part of their position was to constantly run professional development. We had, I would say, once every two weeks someone running workshops. That did play a role, but it was never, I would say, the focus. It would be, for example, using Google Docs where...Google Docs have a classroom group, for example, and then there might be images involved with that.

Andrés: It was never the focus? Or, did an instructor say 'Today we're talking about visual literacy'?

Lola: No. Not that I can recall. That, I would say, is most of my professional development in the last few years has come from in-house workshops. Here I haven't done it as much because I've been doing the writing a lot more. I'm looking at it in a different direction. It's definitely learning as I'm working in the writing.

Andrés: On the job learning?

Lola: Yeah. Obviously, we base activities in the book...For example, in pre-intermediate there's activities that they do. Part of their speaking assessment is that they look at two pictures and they talk about which they prefer.

Andrés: Okay.

Lola: There's also an activity where they think about...They're given a scenario, they have to go their teacher's house and the teacher has a small child, you need to buy a gift for the child. They're presented with all images and they talk through it and it's part of...It's a negotiation, a very basic form of negotiation. They decide which is the best gift to buy for the teacher's child. It's a step towards critical thinking as well because they say 'that's a great gift but it's also \$200 and we don't have that'.

Andrés: Thank you so much. That was the last question.

Lola: Yeah, no problem. My pleasure.

APPENDIX 15. SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT 2: EXCERPT FROM ELICOS FOCUS GROUP

- Andrés: What's going on in this picture, everyone? [Referring to the 'Vive la Commune' image].
- Kylie: Nothing good.
- Mercedes: Propaganda.
- Jacob: Don't ask the Russians, she's jaded and cynical.
- Georgie: It's very beautiful. It looks like a lino-print. It's almost sharp enough to be that, but it's not.
- Jacob: It could be communist art. That amazing artwork that went on. Kylie is not going to be keen on this, but there is a beautiful set of this.
- Kylie: I grew up with this.
- Jacob: I know.
- Kylie: Did you?
- Mercedes: Sorry, how did you get that there was a sense of community from this kind of artwork?
- Kylie: You will be forced to do something you don't want to do.
- Jacob: In French? It's in French 'Viva la commune'. It's not in Russian, so it's not a Russian poster.
- Kylie: The guy is Russian.
- Jacob: He looks Russian, yes, he's a peasant.
- Mercedes: What tells you he's a peasant from Russia?
- Jacob: His dress, his beard. The gun. The stance. The flag.
- Kylie: The gun? In Russia he would have...
- Jacob: A pitchfork.
- Andrés: What more can we find in this picture?
- Mercedes: I don't know if it's trying to look old or if it is really genuinely old. Could be late 1800s, could be mid-1900s. I'm not sure.
- Jacob: This picture's loaded with history for me, and when you say 'community', that's immediately what I think. Just from a personal point of view.
- Mercedes: Why?

Jacob: Well, because I studied Sovietism and Soviet knowledge and European History. These paintings, these pictures, are propaganda posters. Propaganda is a Russian word. This was an industry that was invented, or at least modified and brought up to speed, if you like. Really brought into the big picture, during the Russian revolution.

Kylie: Yes.

Jacob: In the country at the time, when the Bolsheviks seized power.

Kylie: It was the only way to get through to them.

Jacob: I agree with Kylie. It's also now become very tarnished and tainted with all kinds of darkness because of what then happened after. I still have, probably, the luxury of not having lived through that kind of tyranny. I have an overly romantic view of these things. I'm a good Glaswegian communist at heart, so when Andrés says 'community', I think socialism, I think unionism, I think working class.

Kylie: So why is it in French?

Jacob: Because, A) the Russians have been obsessed with everything French for at least two centuries, hence the fact that Hermitage is the name of their biggest museum, and B) probably because during the revolution, French was still the language of international communication. It was the language of diplomacy.

Andrés: So, coming back to the rest the images, out of the four that you've chosen, could you rank them from easiest, to most complex, to understand?

Jacob: For us, or for a learner?

Andrés: To explain the concept of community. Which one would be the easiest? Let's put our teacher's hat on.

Mercedes: What were they? What was the second one?

Andrés: The first one was 'making pizza'.

Mercedes: Yes.

Andrés: The second one, 'the smiley people with colours'.

Mercedes: Smiley people. Yes.

Andrés: Third one was 'sport'.

Jacob: Easiest is smiley people.

Andrés: Smiley people?

Jacob: Yes. Straightforward.

Georgie: I think Slavic people had dark undertones.

Jacob: Dark undertones?

Georgie: There's no context.

Mercedes: They're completely de-contextualised.

Andrés: Which one is number one? You would say is easiest to explain community?

Jacob: Food.

Mercedes: Food.

Jacob: Because everybody eats, and everybody cooks.

Mercedes: This is like one basic community, is the people that you live with, the people that you're related to.

Andrés: The second one?

Jacob: Then, smiley people.

Andrés: Smiley people.

Georgie: Smiley people.

Jacob: Again, there's little to explain.

Georgie: Then, Frisbee.

Kylie: And I think 'Vive la Commune ' is last.

Jacob: That's last. The most difficult.

Georgie: It's got real layered meanings.

Jacob: I'd never use that with learners. You would spend the rest of the day explaining history.

Andrés: If you were to use each of your images that you chose in your teaching, what would your students need to understand? What knowledge would they need in order to be able to engage with this image? Think about it.

Kylie: The third one I like, because I often use food as a topic, because I feel it doesn't need explaining, they already have something that they can engage with. Everyone eats.

Mercedes: I think they need to understand the connection. What's going on in that picture is that people whose hands are reaching across, are people who are working together to put together the food. They need to connect it to the food traditions that are similar to traditions in their own culture, like hot pot.

Kylie: Every culture will have something like that.

- Jacob: They wouldn't just make that connection, especially adults.
- Mercedes: Are we talking about using it with students to demonstrate community? Or, do you just mean in any context?
- Kylie: You have the word 'community' and you need to explain it.
- Mercedes: I think they need to know that the people around, that the people who are eating, if we're talking about the food one and we were going to use it to talk about community, they'd need to be pushed to think about what are the relationships between those people and what's brought them together, and what's their purpose.
- Kylie: What are they doing? How often do they do that? What do you do that's like that?
- Jacob: Actually, we're wrong about the second one, then. Sport would be the next easiest thing to explain, because, for the same reason. Everybody know what sport is, or most people.
- Kylie: Yes, because there's no activity in the smiley people.
- Jacob: Most people know what a team game is and know what's involved in a team game. More so than the sparkly, probably, disturbingly American.
- Mercedes: I wonder if they would know. I wonder how much my students understand. If my students ask me about my free time or my hobbies or whatever, and I tell them that I play competitive sport, I wonder if that has the same meaning to them. It's not like a professional, elite sport, but it's not just battling the shuttlecock around in your pyjamas out the front of your house.
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- James: I've got a much clearer picture in my mind of what you talk about now when you say 'visual literacy'. Initially I was quite 'Ooh, what do we mean by that?' Is that the visual interaction with literacies? The decoding of a text, visually? Now I understand it is more about the contextualisation of language and more about the accessing of language through visual representation.
- Andrés: Mm-hmm (affirmative). What else?
- Mercedes: I had already, I just hadn't used that term, but because I've been studying social semiotics, in linguistics and studying how what we eat and what we wear is actually a visual way of communicating identity, and stuff like that. That concept, I'd already been thinking about, quite a lot, but hadn't heard that term. I had looked it up and read about it and stuff, but I think it's that idea that, yes, like you said.
- Georgie: I think I had a similar idea at the outset, because I think I told you before, when I studied at university, there was a subject called 'Politics of the image', that was all about semiotics of photographs, that's in news media, and studied art history, that sort of thing. There's lots of symbols and that kind of stuff. I never really thought about it, you always have to think about it in relationship to the image to the public, and its intended audience. But, when we're talking about our students who come from all these different, more an international background. That sort of relationship gets lost in the way things were intended to look, and the way they come across.

