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EDITED BY

Ma Elena Gómez Parra,
University of Cordoba, Spain

REVIEWED BY

Alberto Fernández Costales,
University of Oviedo, Spain
Javier Barbero Andrés,
Government of Cantabria, Spain

*CORRESPONDENCE

Oliver Meyer

✉ omeyer@uni-mainz.de

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Pluriliteracies for global citizenship: the 4Rs framework for deeper learning in the modern language(s) classroom

Oliver Meyer^{1*} , Do Coyle², Merilin Aruvee³, Silvia Minardi⁴,
Kathrin Jonas-Lambert⁵ and Kevin Schuck¹

¹Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Mainz, Germany, ²University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, ³University of Tallinn, Tallinn, Estonia, ⁴Liceo Statale "Salvatore Quasimodo", Magenta, Italy, ⁵Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training, Zollikofen, Switzerland

This conceptual article introduces the 4Rs Framework—*Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding*—as a pedagogical model for designing Deeper Learning Episodes (DLEs) in the language-as-discipline classroom. Building on pluriliteracies pedagogy and research into disciplinary literacies, global citizenship, and epistemic fluency, the framework re-envisioning how language learning can integrate cognitive, ethical, and affective dimensions of growth. While task-based language teaching (TBLT) has advanced communicative competence and authenticity, research also highlights challenges in maintaining conceptual depth and transfer. The 4Rs Framework complements these strengths by embedding feedback, scaffolding, and relevance within recursive learning spirals that connect knowledge building to civic and intercultural engagement. Each "R" represents a distinctive literacy practice: *Reading* across plurimodal and multilingual texts; *Repositioning* through multiperspectival inquiry; *Reflecting* via epistemic humility and compassionate understanding; and *Responding* through ethically grounded participation and action. Together, these practices transform the language(s) classroom into a space for disciplinary thinking, meaning-making, and responsible global citizenship. The article concludes by outlining a research agenda for examining how 4Rs-based design can enhance progression, transfer, and learner flourishing across educational contexts.

KEYWORDS

affective learning, deeper learning, disciplinary literacies, epistemic fluency, global citizenship, pluriliteracies, task design

1 Introduction

The rationale for pluriliteracies has always been twofold: to deepen classroom learning by adopting disciplinary ways of constructing knowledge (Coyle and Meyer, 2021), and to equip learners with pluriliterate repertoires for communicating understanding across languages, cultures, and communities through a wide variety of genres, text types, and modes chosen to fit their purpose. At its heart lies the premise that learners can be apprenticed from novices to experts (Lantolf and Poehner, 2014), moving along knowledge pathways into disciplinary understanding (Byrnes, 2002; Mohan et al., 2010; Solomon, 1983) and negotiating meaning across an inclusive mode continuum from more concrete to more abstract communication (Hallet, 2016; Leisen, 2005; Martin and

Rose 2008; Unsworth, 2004). Deeper understanding and transferable knowledge for lifelong learning emerge when disciplinary ways of constructing and demonstrating understanding are made visible and accessible (Anderson, 1983; Bransford et al., 2000; National Research Council (NRC), 2012; Novak, 2002; Schwartz et al., 2005). This process depends on three conditions: that engagement is nurtured through relevance, structure and agency (Hospel and Galand, 2016; Shernoff et al., 2016; Wang and Degol, 2014); that achievement is sustained through feedback, scaffolding and assessment practices which affirm progression and support growth mindsets (Hattie and Clarke, 2019; Hattie and Timperley, 2007); and that personal growth and flourishing (OECD, 2025) are mentored across cognitive, affective, social and sensorimotor domains (Dettmer, 2005).

Yet, the social, economic, and political conditions of our time demand more. As humanity faces unprecedented challenges related to climate, democracy, and international peace—while societies simultaneously grapple with disinformation, populism, and socio-political fragmentation — it is imperative that education address these new realities. Global foresight reports highlight how environmental, technological, and geopolitical risks increasingly intersect, demanding collective and anticipatory responses (IPCC, 2023; OECD, 2019; World Economic Forum (WEF), 2025). In this context, education is called upon to foster the capacity to engage with divergent perspectives, to question the sources and motives behind information, and to act responsibly in the face of global challenges whose repercussions are felt individually and locally but whose solutions often exceed regional or national boundaries (OECD, 2018a, 2019).

It is precisely in response to these conditions that the present article introduces the 4Rs Framework as a distinct pedagogical model for the language-as-discipline classroom. By integrating linguistic, epistemic, ethical, and affective dimensions of meaning-making, the framework moves language education beyond proficiency alone towards deeper learning for creative and responsible global citizenship. It invites learners to reflect on and reconsider how they think, feel, communicate, and engage in relation to global issues. In this way, pluriliteracies pedagogy turns towards creative and responsible global citizenship.

Global citizenship is a contested and evolving concept shaped by diverse political, ethical, and educational traditions. Following UNESCO (2015) and the OECD (2018b), we understand it not as a fixed set of behaviours but as the growing capacity to examine global issues critically, consider multiple perspectives with empathy and openness, engage in respectful dialogue, and act in ways that are ethically and socially responsible. This framing aligns with recent critiques that caution against depoliticised or overly instrumental uses of the term, foregrounding instead the relational, reflective, and meaning-making practices through which learners navigate global interdependencies in the language (s) classroom.

We believe that language(s) education is central to cultivating empathy, epistemic fluency, and critical responsiveness. At the same time, foreign language education is never value-free. Decisions about languages, cultures, and communication

inevitably shape how learners understand civic identity and belonging:

(...) language education reflects stances on the value of local, national, global civic identities, and among approaches to community such as assimilationism vs. multiculturalism, and neoliberalism verses cosmopolitanism. Although these values may be unintentional or ‘hidden’, they should be considered in deliberating over foreign language education policy and curricula in relation to civic identity (Jackson, 2023, p. 58)

Recent work that interrogates the intersections of global citizenship education and human rights education reinforces that human rights and democracy underpin any understanding of citizenship and, by extension, global citizenship education (Ferguson and Neoh, 2025). As Starkey (2023) observes (p. 64), “Moral commitments to each other are reinforced by the interconnectedness that is so clearly evident in the experience of the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic and the extraordinary meteorological events provoked by climate change”. He further notes that such ecological interconnections — for example, through climate change and global epidemics — require collective responses that address both present and future generations.

Such insights show that when the language(s) classroom becomes a space for learners to critically examine and explore global interconnections, it plays a fundamental role in shaping individual realities:

If globalization means that local and global are no longer points on a spectrum but rather intertwined and interconnected concepts, then people can recognize issues of global concern such as climate change or wars that provoke migrations as part of everyday local experiences for which a national identity has little explanatory power (Starkey, 2023, p. 67)

Our approach resonates strongly with what Starkey (2023) terms *critical global citizenship education*, which emphasises social justice, multiculturalism, critical awareness of global power asymmetries, and the transformative potential of education. By aligning pluriliteracies pedagogy with this orientation, we propose an approach to creative and responsible global citizenship that makes the civic dimensions of language(s) education visible, deliberate, and ethically grounded. We add the dimension of creative global citizenship to emphasise the imaginative and meaning-making dimensions embedded in pluriliteracies pedagogy. Creativity here refers not only to producing new texts or modes but also to envisioning alternative perspectives, forging connections across cultural and epistemic boundaries, and generating openness to novel ways of engaging with global challenges.

In this view, global citizenship is not a fixed construct or pre-defined set of competences but an organic, socially mediated practice of engagement, shaped by individual experiences and collective dialogue. In order to address and live through global challenges, learners need to move beyond individual narratives,

beliefs and rationalisations, to engage in what Kramersch (2009, 2021, 2022) calls epistemic decentring—to “walk in somebody else’s problem”—and to reflect critically and empathically on both self and other. This may at times involve repositioning one’s standpoint or even changing one’s mind; yet such repositioning may not always be possible, nor should it be indiscriminate: learners may well encounter positions they cannot, and indeed should not, accept—those that violate human dignity, rights, or fundamental laws. The practice of global citizenship thus combines openness to otherness with ethical vigilance, cultivating the capacity to discern when connection deepens understanding and when resistance protects fundamental values (Foley, 2025).

In our earlier work, we argued that recalibrating language(s) learning toward global citizenship is made possible through reconceptualising language(s) classrooms as ecological spaces for (inter-) disciplinary learning (Meyer and Coyle, 2023; Pylonitis and Meyer, 2024). Such a reconceptualisation highlights the distinctive contribution that we attribute to the language-as-discipline classroom in education for a post-truth world: by connecting languages, cultures, and literatures to foster both textual and epistemic fluency alongside empathy, learners can practise meaningful conversation across echo chambers and filter bubbles. By considering diverse viewpoints, learners can identify and recognise biases that privilege their own perspectives and practise constructive dialogue across divides.

These practices are encapsulated in the 4Rs Framework, which we introduce in this article as a pedagogical model for cultivating global citizenship as practice. The 4Rs respond to contemporary imperatives by offering a structured and recursive process for learning that connects disciplinary and critical literacies with civic and ethical engagement. Through this process, learners engage with multiple texts and perspectives across genres and modes, critically evaluating knowledge claims while reflecting on and refining their own positions.

They also explore how global awareness connects to their daily lives and how it can open possibilities for actionable knowledge and responses—large or small—that lead to more responsible forms of engagement.

Our framework operationalises key constructs from our previous work—textual and epistemic fluency, empathy, and compassionate engagement—linking them with emerging insights from research on disciplinary literacies (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2024; Fang and Schleppegrell, 2010; Goldman et al., 2016; Moje, 2008, 2015; Shanahan and Shanahan, 2008), as well as on critical and digital literacies and argumentation (Andriessen and Baker, 2022; Howat et al., 2022; Kozyreva et al., 2023; Nussbaum, 2020; SHEG, 2016, 2022; McGrew and Byrne, 2022), and intercultural theory (Kramersch, 2009, 2021, 2022; Porto et al., 2017). The 4Rs Framework thus creates the pedagogical space where intercultural, plurilingual, disciplinary, and critical literacies intersect, taking a multidimensional and plurimodal perspective on global issues and providing opportunities for learners’ communicative, cognitive, personal, and civic growth as global citizens. In this sense, it extends meaning-oriented approaches by making conceptual development and deeper understanding visible and teachable within language education.

The distinctive contribution of the 4Rs lies in integrating linguistic, epistemic, ethical, and affective dimensions of

meaning-making into a single pedagogical framework, enabling learners to connect textual analysis with perspective-taking, reflective judgement, and civic agency in ways that existing approaches only partially address.

As a conceptual contribution, this article synthesises research on pluriliteracies, disciplinary literacies, and global citizenship education to articulate a pedagogical framework rather than report empirical findings, with classroom validation forming a parallel strand of ongoing work.

This article builds on and extends the pluriliteracies research programme initiated by Meyer et al. (2015) and further developed through a series of conceptual and empirical studies culminating in Coyle and Meyer (2021). While earlier work primarily examined learning through other languages in CLIL and bilingual settings, the present article focuses on learning both in and about the language(s) classroom itself. In doing so, it reframes the pluriliteracies approach for the language-as-discipline context—asking what it means to treat languages as disciplines in their own right, how disciplinary ways of knowing and reasoning manifest within language education, and how these processes can be mobilised to cultivate creative and responsible global citizenship. In this sense, the 4Rs Framework represents a significant next step: a conceptual and pedagogical design tool for integrating pluriliteracies in the language(s) classroom, linking epistemic, personal and affective growth through recursive cycles of meaning-making that connect classroom learning with wider human concerns.

The following section elaborates each of the four interrelated practices—Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding—through which the 4Rs Framework becomes pedagogically actionable in the language-as-discipline classroom.

2 The 4Rs framework

2.1 Reading: from single text decoding to plurimodal meaning-making

Reading, in the 4Rs Framework, extends far beyond the decoding of written and often isolated texts. As a core disciplinary activity, it encompasses the ability to navigate, evaluate, and integrate across multiple texts (Goldman et al., 2016) in multiple modes. In this sense, “reading” encompasses the active process of (co-)constructing meaning through any type of text in any mode:

The New London Group (1996) argued that when learners encounter and coordinate linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal ensembles of meaning, multiliteracies will emerge. Building on this foundation, work on pluriliteracies (García et al., 2007) and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) has shown how disciplinary knowledge is typically communicated through multiple semiotic resources (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday and Martin, 1993; Martin, 1992; Martin and Rose, 2008; Martin and White, 2005; Rose and Martin, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004; Unsworth, 2004).

Extending these insights, Coyle and Meyer (2021) offer a plurimodal reconceptualisation of the mode continuum, which situates communicative practices along a spectrum from communication closer to personal experience—more concrete

and action-linked—toward communication further from personal experience—more abstract, reflective, and academic. Along this continuum, learners move between oral, written, analogue, and digital forms, as well as plurimodal ensembles that combine them, progressively broadening their repertoires as they develop their capacity to make meaning.

In this sense, reading is not simply the surface comprehension of linear texts but the dynamic practice of plurimodal meaning-making across genres and media. A YouTube commentary, a poem, a data visualisation, and a social-media meme are all texts that invite different literacy practices. The pluriliterate learner therefore needs to learn how to decode language and visuals, navigate hyperlinked and interactive spaces, evaluate how modes work together to position readers, and synthesise across plurimodal constellations of literary and non-literary, fictional and nonfictional texts.

Building on recent work in disciplinary literacies, we understand reading in the language(s) classroom not as generic comprehension but as a disciplinary practice. Goldman et al. (2016) show that traditional models of single-text comprehension are inadequate for authentic learning tasks in literature, science, and history, where no single text provides a complete account. Instead, readers must coordinate sometimes contradictory information from multiple texts, construct integrated and intertextual representations of content and sources, and align their interpretations with disciplinary criteria for evidence-based knowledge claims. In her more recent analysis of the “science of reading”, Goldman (2024) argues that reading must therefore be reconceptualised as a complex, context-dependent, and explicitly intertextual process that varies across disciplines and learner trajectories.

Within the 4Rs Framework, we take this shift seriously by foregrounding reading as a disciplinary and intertextual practice that sets in motion Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding as forms of epistemic, affective, and civic work in the language-as-discipline classroom.

Deeper understanding of texts involves more than decoding or retrieving information: it entails recognising how meaning is constructed, framed, and negotiated through language and other modes. In our approach, *discourse, genre, and mode* awareness become an engine for inquiry: learners deepen textual understanding by examining how concepts are built, how lexis and collocation convey stance, how sentence- and discourse-level choices organise ideas, how genre and mode shape interpretation, and how cultural and ideological assumptions position readers. These are layers of understanding rather than steps on a staircase. Teachers move beyond plot or gist to design tasks that make these layers visible and accessible for all learners.

As Coyle and Meyer (2021) emphasise, deepening textual understanding involves guiding learners to recognise and work across these successive layers of meaning—from initial recognition of what a text communicates, through exploration of how that meaning is constructed, to reflection on why it matters and how it could be interpreted differently. This layered view resonates with King and Kitchener’s (2004) model of reflective judgment and with Wijnands et al.’s (2021) pedagogical template for cognitive and reflective growth. Both identify qualitatively different ways of engaging with knowledge: in a

pre-reflective stance, meanings are treated as fixed and authoritative; in a quasi-reflective stance, multiple interpretations are acknowledged but not yet weighed; and in a reflective stance, understanding is built through analysis of evidence, contextual awareness, and linguistic insight.

Deeper learning therefore aims not to move learners through a prescribed sequence but to help them operate flexibly within and across these reflective layers of understanding. It cultivates the disposition to ask how knowledge is constructed, how language and multimodality shape that construction, and how meaning can be re-evaluated in dialogue with others. When learners learn to think about language, they become able to think with language—using it as a tool for reasoning, empathy, and action.

These reflective dimensions of reading create the conditions for epistemic fluency: the ability to shift between analytical, empathic, and ethically aware lenses when evaluating knowledge claims or perspectives. Yet reading also involves a balance between critical detachment and aesthetic engagement. Research on reading for pleasure shows that sustained reading depends not only on analysis but on enjoyment, wonder, and the felt reward of meaning-making itself. As Vogrinčič Čepič et al. (2024) demonstrate, experiences of curiosity, choice, and emotional resonance deepen engagement and foster lasting connections between readers and texts. In this sense, Reading becomes a space where critical awareness and imaginative engagement meet, making it both an intellectual and an affective journey toward understanding.

2.2 Repositioning: from intertextuality to empathy and critical epistemic fluency

Project READI’s (Goldman et al., 2016) disciplinary core constructs position epistemology and inquiry practices at the centre of disciplines: what counts as knowledge, and how is evidence validated? In the language(s) classroom, this translates into *epistemic decentring*—the ability to move outside one’s own worldview and default assumptions about what counts as knowledge, evidence, and justification in order to acknowledge the legitimacy of alternative ways of knowing. In our framework, Repositioning therefore requires learners to suspend premature judgment, remain open to multiple perspectives, and regulate their conclusions only after careful, socially mediated evaluation.

Building on this disciplinary perspective, literary theorists have long emphasised intertextuality as a core feature of meaning-making (Bakhtin, 1981; Kristeva, 1980). In Kramersch’s work, literature is valued precisely because it provides learners with ways of seeing ‘through the eyes of others,’ offering symbolic resources for decentring one’s own epistemological position (Kramersch, 2022). When fictional and non-fictional texts are juxtaposed—for example, a novel on migration read alongside news reportage, NGO testimony, or social media narratives—learners begin to see how different genres and media encode divergent claims to truth and voice.

Such intertextual juxtapositions also make visible how discourses are never neutral but serve particular interests—a concern central to critical literacy (Freire, 1970; Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 2010). In practice, Repositioning therefore entails asking: how does this text position me as a reader? Whose voice

is amplified, and whose is silenced? In this way, Repositioning operationalises critical discourse awareness—not as abstract critique, but as a disciplinary apprenticeship into how arguments, stories, and evidence are framed.

Taken together, these perspectives show that Repositioning in the 4Rs Framework is the space where learners bring different kinds of texts into dialogue—fictional and non-fictional, formal and informal, continuous and discontinuous, print-based and digital, or plurimodal. Here they learn to trace both overlaps and differences across ways of knowing, to notice how power and ideology shape discourse, and to distinguish genuine epistemic decentring from monocentric interpretation.

Contrasting and re-evaluating perspectives prepares the ground for Reflecting, where learners analyse meaning and consider how knowledge itself is constructed, justified, and ethically situated.

2.3 Reflecting: from metacognition to epistemic humility and epistemic reflexivity

Within the 4Rs Framework, Reflecting is not an optional afterthought but a core dimension of learning. It entails the deliberate questioning of one's own assumptions, the reconsideration of evolving perspectives, and the cultivation of dispositions that link epistemic work with ethical orientation. In this sense, Reflecting embraces reflexivity, understood as a cyclical process of self-examination that connects personal positioning to broader social, cultural, and disciplinary contexts (Wang, 2024). Recent work by Mohamed et al. (2022) reinforces this multidimensional view, presenting reflection as a complex, layered process that integrates problem-solving, action orientation, and critical awareness—an approach that closely aligns with the 4Rs understanding of reflection as both epistemic and ethical practice. In this process, reflecting on language feeds reflecting through language: learners first analyse how linguistic and plurimodal choices shape meaning and, through that analysis, learn to use language as a tool for inquiry, reasoning, and ethical dialogue.

Goldman et al. (2016) identify reflection as integral to the construction of arguments: learners are expected to formulate claims, draw on evidence, and justify warrants in ways that align with disciplinary norms. Such processes require learners to ask not only *what do these texts say?* but also *what do I now think, and why?*—making their own epistemic positioning explicit and subject to scrutiny. This also aligns with the framework of reflective judgment (King and Kitchener, 2004), which distinguishes between pre-reflective, quasi-reflective, and reflective orientations to knowledge—helping learners understand how evidence and perspective interact in the formation of justified claims.

Beyond this metacognitive dimension, we treat Reflecting as also affective and relational. Learning is not purely cognitive: it is emotional and social, shaped by empathy, curiosity, uncertainty, and at times discomfort. In this sense, Reflecting *creates space* for engaging difference constructively, where disagreement can become productive when guided by respect and oriented toward shared understanding. It therefore extends the layered understanding of texts discussed in Section 2.1, moving from analysing how meaning is made to considering how knowledge itself is constructed and justified.

A further defining feature of Reflecting is *intellectual or epistemic humility*: the recognition that one's own perspective is partial, provisional, and open to challenge (Sivakumar and Boon, 2024). Without that humility, learners are unlikely to engage genuinely with alternative viewpoints, to question themselves, or to read differently. This humility makes epistemic decentring possible, as discussed earlier. Yet, openness must also be accompanied by discernment. Reflecting may involve repositioning one's standpoint or even changing one's mind, but it is never indiscriminate. Learners must also learn to recognise positions they cannot, and should not, accept—those that violate dignity, rights, or fundamental values. Muyskens et al. (2024) elaborate a relational perspective on epistemic humility, emphasising that humility is shaped in dialogue and encounter rather than in isolation. Reflecting therefore, entails a balance between openness and resistance: the readiness to engage other perspectives, and the discernment to reject those that compromise ethical integrity.

Building on these insights, Reflecting is conceptualised here as *epistemic reflexivity*: an intentional internal dialogue in which learners examine how they know, what they take to count as evidence, and how they justify, revise, and use knowledge in relation to others. This framing aligns with Feucht et al.'s (2017) shift from personal epistemology (belief-focused accounts of certainty, evidence, and justification) toward *epistemic cognition*, a broader construct that, as Greene et al., 2016, describe it, “concerns how people acquire, understand, justify, change and use knowledge” (Greene et al., 2016, as cited in Feucht et al., 2017, p. 235). In this sense, epistemic reflexivity does not replace epistemic cognition; rather, it specifies the reflective mechanism—an internal, evaluative dialogue—through which epistemic cognition becomes conscious, contestable, and open to ethically grounded revision. Epistemic reflexivity therefore extends reflection as retrospective sense-making toward a forward-looking orientation that prepares learners for responsible participation and ethically grounded engagement. This orientation is operationalised most explicitly in the Transfer phase prompts in Chapter 3.2, where learners are invited to make their internal dialogue visible through shifts in how they justify claims (Thinking), register ethical and affective responses (Feeling), re-voice perspectives in dialogue (Saying), and translate revised understanding into proportionate forms of action (Doing).

In the 4Rs Framework, then, Reflecting is where learners articulate their own evolving stance, examine biases and blind spots, and cultivate empathy and compassion as dispositions. It is here that epistemic humility becomes operational: learners learn to acknowledge uncertainty, to practise patience before judgment, and to weigh perspectives in relation to both knowledge claims and ethical commitments. Reflecting thus links textual and epistemic fluency with the affective and ethical fluencies that underpin responsible global citizenship.

2.4 Responding: from reflective dialogue to ethical and responsible civic agency

Responding is the fourth stage of the 4Rs Framework. It moves learners from critical awareness to purposeful participation, where meaning-making extends beyond individual reflection and collective classroom dialogue into citizenship practices. In

disciplinary literacy research, argument has often been treated as the final outcome of inquiry: students are expected to make claims, marshal evidence, and justify their reasoning in written or oral form (Goldman et al., 2016). While such practices are essential, they risk narrowing argumentation to persuasion alone, obscuring its potential as a dialogic and relational practice of engaging across divides.

Policy frameworks in global citizenship education emphasise that meaningful response develops across several domains. UNESCO (2015) distinguishes between cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioural dimensions of learning, while the OECD (2018a) conceptualises global competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable learners to examine issues, understand others' perspectives, and act responsibly. In environmental and citizenship education, the action-competence tradition (Jensen and Schnack, 1997) similarly argues that response is not limited to outward projects but emerges from learners' ability and willingness to make informed decisions, engage in dialogue, and consider the consequences of possible actions. Taken together, these perspectives support a multidimensional view of Responding that aligns with the trajectory of the 4Rs. These dimensions are summarised in Chapter 3.2, which offers guiding questions to help teachers recognise how learners' responses may take shape across cognitive, affective, discursive, behavioural, and identity-related forms of engagement.

Work in argumentation studies has pointed in this direction. Kuhn (2005) frames argument as a vehicle for inquiry, while Mercer (2000) emphasises "exploratory talk" as a mode of dialogue where disagreement is productive when oriented toward shared meaning-making. Our own work has extended these insights by highlighting the connecting axis: the role of empathy and compassion in transforming argument from adversarial contest into collaborative engagement (Pylonitis and Meyer, 2024). Research on social and emotional learning points to similar dynamics, suggesting that empathy, emotional awareness, and relational understanding can support learners' readiness to listen, consider alternative viewpoints, and participate constructively in dialogue (Brush et al., 2022; Chowkase, 2023). In this sense, Responding requires learners not only to present and defend positions but also to engage with others in ways that are respectful and relationally attuned—for example, by listening carefully, representing alternative viewpoints fairly, and considering how their words and actions affect others.

Critical literacy traditions make the same point from another angle. Freire (1970) emphasised that literacy is much more than interpretive; it carries a responsive dimension: reading the word and the world are intertwined, and each invites forms of reflective action. Janks (2010) and Pratt and Foley (2019) describe this action as redesign—the production of counter-texts that challenge and reframe dominant discourses. Responding, in our framework, extends these insights by encouraging learners to move from critique to creation: producing texts, discourses, and interventions that are grounded in evidence, shaped by empathy, and oriented to responsibility and sustainable action. In this way, learners practise connecting understanding with possible forms of response—some of which may take shape as local action for global citizenship, while others remain reflective or dialogic within the classroom.

This is particularly urgent in the digital sphere, where civic online reasoning (McGrew and Byrne, 2022; Wineburg et al.,

2016) highlights both the need and the opportunity for learners to participate responsibly in networked publics. Here, Responding means not only evaluating claims but also contributing to dialogue, whether through fact-checking, counterargument, or the creative design of contemporary genres such as podcasts, social media campaigns, or op-eds. In all cases, the ethical dimension is crucial: Responding involves the epistemic humility to acknowledge uncertainty, the compassion to respect the dignity of others, and the discernment to resist positions that compromise human rights or justice.

In practice, then, Responding in the 4Rs Framework is the educational design space where learners articulate dialogic arguments, produce texts for authentic audiences, and—when the opportunity arises—translate awareness into action. It is where critical awareness becomes civic agency, where plurimodal meaning-making is mobilised for social participation, and where empathy and compassion become enacted rather than merely invoked. Responding thus completes the cycle of the 4Rs, ensuring that pluriliteracies for global citizenship are not only conceptualised and reflected upon, but lived out in ethical and responsible engagement with the world.

2.5 Synthesis

The 4Rs form a recursive spiral rather than a linear sequence: each episode of Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding generates insights and questions that carry forward into the next. The value of the framework lies not in the four practices taken separately, but in how they interact to deepen understanding over time. Reading cultivates multiperspectival insight; Repositioning contrasts and evaluates perspectives; Reflecting orients plurality toward ethical responsibility through epistemic humility, empathy, and compassion; and Responding translates such orientations into purposeful participation and action.

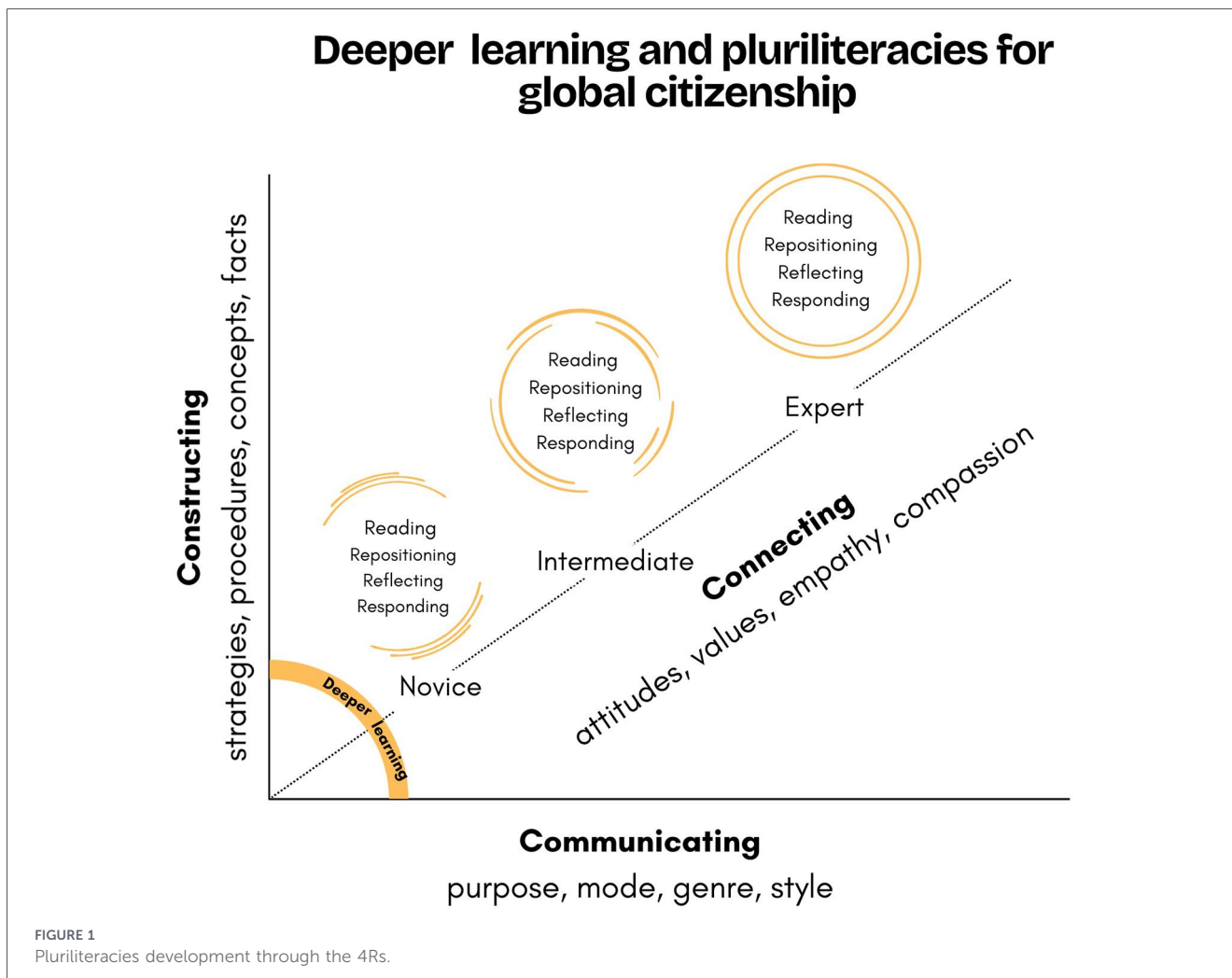
Taken together, these interwoven practices synthesise research on disciplinary literacy, intercultural learning, critical and digital literacies, civic reasoning and arguing, second language acquisition, and language pedagogy/didactics—among other fields—into a single, pedagogically actionable structure. The achievement lies less in introducing new constructs than in integrating these diverse traditions into a framework that teachers can mobilise to design learning episodes in the language-as-discipline classroom.

This becomes a reality when teachers and learners engage in learning partnerships to conceptualise, communicate, and connect in increasingly profound ways to understand and argue global issues, translating their insights into local contexts (Figure 1):

In the next section, we turn to pedagogy, illustrating how the recursive cycle of the 4Rs is enacted through (DLEs) that make progression visible and sustainable in the language-as-discipline classroom.

3 Generating spirals of deeper learning through the 4Rs

The synthesis of the 4Rs as a recursive framework highlights their potential for cultivating global citizenship through pluriliteracies. Yet a framework alone is not enough: its value lies



in how teachers, together with learners, make it a reality in the classroom. The next section therefore turns from theory to design, showing how the 4Rs can inform the design of deeper learning episodes. Here we illustrate how Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding can be sequenced and scaffolded so that each episode organically generates the next, enabling learners to deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and translate insights into meaningful action.

3.1 Deeper learning episodes: moving beyond task-based language teaching and learning

Deeper Learning Episodes (DLEs) are the pedagogical design units through which pluriliteracies pedagogy becomes operational. We coined the term to distinguish them from conventional lessons or tasks, since a DLE is not confined by time allocation but defined by its purpose and structure: to incite and sustain deeper learning across a sequence of interconnected phases (Coyle and Meyer, 2021). Each episode may extend across several lessons if needed and flows organically into the next when learners demonstrate sufficient conceptual understanding and mastery of targeted skills, serving

as a flexible design frame rather than a fixed cycle. Within the 4Rs Framework, DLEs provide the pedagogical architecture that makes recursive cycles of Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding teachable and visible. Designing DLEs also involves attending to the mode continuum, supporting learners as they move back and forth between more concrete, experiential modes of communication and more abstract, reflective, and academic ones, using plurimodal scaffolds to make these shifts purposeful and visible.

In *Beyond CLIL* (Coyle and Meyer, 2021), the design of a Deeper Learning Episode is framed by four interrelated planning questions that connect purpose, process, and progression: What do I want my learners to know or be able to do? How will they demonstrate increasingly deeper understanding at the surface, consolidation, and transfer levels? What is the best way for them to actively co-construct knowledge? And how can I support them every step of the way? These questions provide the structural coherence of a DLE by aligning intended understanding, evidence of learning, and scaffolding for growth. The more fine-grained prompts in Chapter 3.2 build directly on this foundation, translating these overarching design principles into phase-specific questions that sustain deeper learning through the 4Rs.

DLEs draw on two core processes of deeper learning elaborated in *Beyond CLIL* (Coyle and Meyer, 2021): the

internalisation of conceptual knowledge and the automatization of skills and strategies. Internalisation develops as learners connect new content to prior knowledge, represent and refine ideas through languaging, and consolidate concepts into flexible schemata (Lantolf and Poehner, 2014; Novak, 2002). Automatization depends on deep practice, the deliberate rehearsal of skills and strategies until they can be fluently and efficiently applied (Anderson, 1983; Segalowitz, 2003). Within these processes, attention to linguistic form is embedded rather than isolated: learners revisit grammar, lexis, and discourse patterns as tools for refining meaning and achieving fluency, accuracy, and complexity, while also developing functional adequacy—the ability to use language appropriately and effectively for specific communicative purposes. Together, these processes enable both powerful conceptual networks and the procedural fluency to activate them across contexts.

Yet, internalisation and automatization cannot unfold in a vacuum. *Beyond CLIL* makes clear that the drivers of deeper learning are equally important: student engagement, teacher engagement, and the relevance of content (Coyle and Meyer, 2021, pp. 40–45). Engagement is not simply motivational “buy-in” but, as Wang et al. (2016) put it, “energy in action”—a multidimensional construct involving behavioural, affective, social, and cognitive investment. Deep engagement enables deeper processing and learning, whereas low levels of engagement are typically associated with more surface-level approaches (Lam et al., 2012). Teachers sustain learner engagement not only through scaffolding, feedback, and

mentoring for growth mindsets but especially through establishing relevance—making transparent why content matters in learners’ present and future lives. Priniski et al.’s (2018) *Relevance Continuum* demonstrates that relevance transforms situational interest into sustained investment, and that relevance is decisive for transfer: learners are more likely to generalise concepts and strategies when they see how these connect with their own lives, real-world issues, challenges, and opportunities.

A DLE is explicitly structured to integrate both drivers and mechanics (Figure 2):

- In the *activation phase*, relevance is established, engagement sparked, and the learning trajectory made visible by linking prior knowledge to compelling problems or authentic contexts.
- In the *surface phase*, learners encounter new concepts and skills and begin forming initial conceptual links.
- In the *consolidation phase*, these concepts are deepened and skills automatized through scaffolded practice, feedback, and reflection.
- In the *transfer phase*, learners apply knowledge in new contexts, demonstrating deeper understanding alongside textual and epistemic fluency.

Across the episode, learners also find imaginative and multimodal ways of expressing and reconfiguring their insights and responses, as the pluriliteracies approach invites meaning-making that is not only analytical but also creative in how understanding is

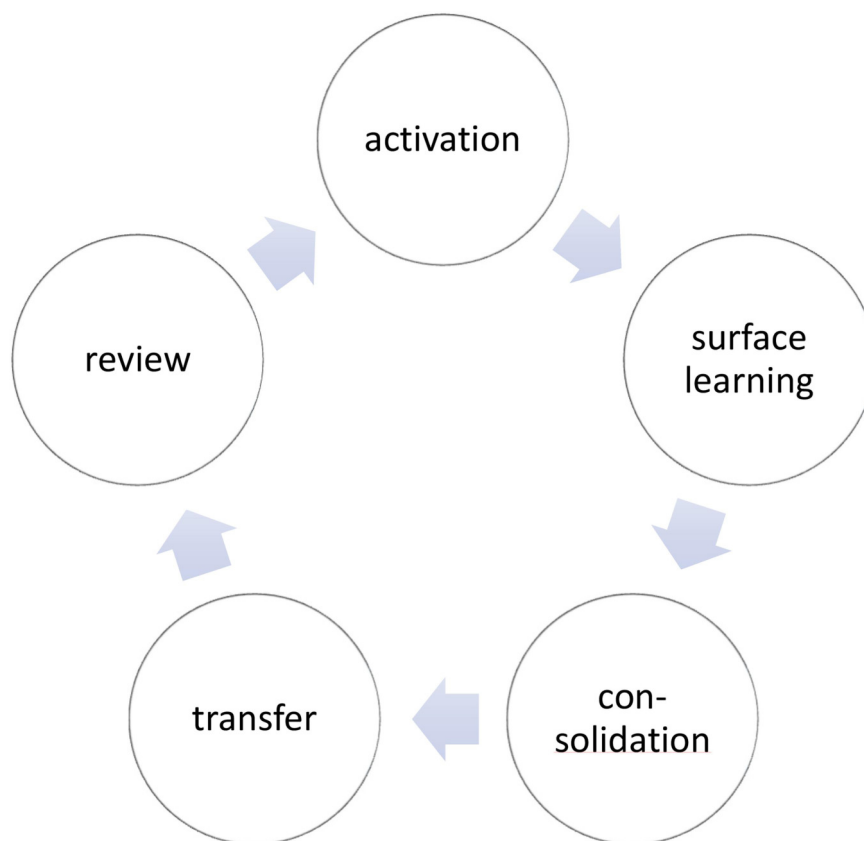


FIGURE 2
Prototypical structure of a deeper learning episode.

articulated and enacted. In doing so, reflection and feedback provide the throughline of the episode: they run across all phases, enabling learners to revisit earlier outputs, refine ideas, and consolidate both the mechanics and the drivers of deeper learning.

In the broader pedagogical context, Deeper Learning Episodes resonate with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which has provided a powerful framework for meaning-focused communication and learner engagement (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). Rather than replicating this tradition, we situate meaning-making in environments equally concerned with conceptual understanding and epistemic growth, judging quality not only by communicative success but by how learners use language to construct, connect, and justify knowledge across disciplinary and ethical dimensions.

TBLT remains a highly influential approach in language education. Its central design is the task cycle—comprising pre-task, task, and post-task phases that guide activation, interaction, and feedback (Willis and Willis, 2007). This structure has clear strengths: it tends to prioritise meaning before form, often increases motivation, and can create authentic communicative opportunities. However, research also highlights persistent challenges that clarify why DLEs take a broader view of learning.

At the theoretical level, scholars have questioned how far TBLT specifies the role of form-focused work. Swan (2005) and Bruton (2002, 2005) note that incidental attention to form cannot replace systematic grammatical development, particularly in monolingual classrooms or for less advanced learners. Seedhouse (1999) adds that classroom interaction often diverges from pedagogic intentions, limiting links between task conditions and learning opportunities.

At the implementation level, studies foregrounding TBLT reveal consistent theory–practice gaps: across diverse contexts, teachers frequently shorten tasks, abbreviate post-task phases, or reintroduce grammar teaching in ways that reshape the intended cycle (Beccia, 2021; Carless, 2007; Huynh and Nguyen, 2023). Findings also indicate that explicit scaffolding can enhance both implicit and explicit learning when consistently provided (Michaud and Ammar, 2023).

Meta-analyses reinforce these conclusions. Norris and Ortega (2000) show that explicit instruction generally yields stronger outcomes than implicit; Spada and Tomita (2010) confirm its importance for complex structures. Bryfonski and McKay (2019) and Boers and Faez (2023) add that effectiveness depends less on the label “*task-based*” than on coherent design and assessment alignment, cautioning that definitions and evidence remain heterogeneous.

Recent empirical and technological studies echo these cautions. Wei and Zhao (2024) found that while TBLT can foster fluency and pragmatic development, gains in coherence and cohesion were limited. Reviews of technology-mediated TBLT (Bhandari et al., 2025; Kim and Namkung, 2024) show that much research remains short-term and descriptive, often relying on perception-based evidence with little longitudinal follow-up. Such findings caution assumptions that communicative performance automatically translates into deeper conceptual or pragmatic competence.

Taken together, these findings—from theoretical, empirical, and technological perspectives—strengthen the case for pedagogical designs that integrate feedback, scaffolding, and relevance throughout.

Similar concerns have been raised beyond language education. Christodoulou (2017) distinguishes between learning and performance tasks, arguing that approaches focused mainly on performance may undervalue the role of deliberate practice in developing competence. This does not suggest that performance tasks are meaningless—they can provide valuable evidence of what learners can currently do—but competence development depends on systematic teaching, conceptual growth, and opportunities for deep practice.

Against this backdrop, Deeper Learning Episodes extend and deepen the task-cycle model by systematically integrating both learning and performance tasks. They ensure that demonstrations of performance are not treated as ends in themselves but are grounded in structured opportunities for conceptual growth, scaffolded practice, and cycles of feedback, feed-up, and feed-forward (Table 1).

To support practitioners in designing DLEs, *Beyond CLIL* introduced the construct of task fidelity: the degree to which an

TABLE 1 Key differences between traditional task cycles and DLEs.

Feature	Traditional task cycle (TBLT)	Deeper learning episodes (DLEs)
Duration	Typically, one lesson or a short sequence (pre → task → post).	Multi-lesson episodes forming recursive spirals that organically lead into the next.
Mechanics vs. Drivers	Focus on meaning/output; form addressed mostly post-task; drivers (engagement, relevance) often assumed.	Mechanics—internalisation of conceptual knowledge and automatization of skills and strategies—and drivers (engagement, relevance, teacher scaffolding) are explicitly integrated throughout.
Reflection & Feedback	Concentrated at end of the cycle; quality often variable.	Built in at all phases through iterative cycles of reflection, feedback, feed-up, feed-forward and revision.
Transfer & Depth	Task performance may not secure transfer. Automatization rarely addressed.	Transfer is a designed outcome. Depth and automatization are explicit aims.
Relevance	Tasks labelled ‘authentic,’ but links to learners’ lives often superficial.	Relevance is systematically designed; tasks link to learners’ identities and well-being, present/future lives, and global challenges.
Endpoint	Task completion; communicative performance.	Deeper understanding characterized by increasingly internalised concepts, automatized skills and strategies, sustained engagement and civic agency.

episode embodies design principles that maximise opportunities for deeper learning (Coyle and Meyer, 2021, pp. 131–132). While the original framework identified ten core principles, our work adapts and extends these to align explicitly with the 4Rs and to attend to the affective dimensions of learning. The following list (Table 2) illustrates how task fidelity can be reinterpreted in pluriliteracies pedagogy, emphasising progression across Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding while retaining the underlying concern with depth, transfer, and growth.

Collectively, these ten principles specify task fidelity for the language-as-discipline classroom: they keep relevance, scaffolding, assessment, and the affective dimension in view whilst ensuring progression across the 4Rs. To make these principles teachable and observable, we now ‘pin’ them to the phases of a Deeper Learning Episode, showing how its elements align with Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding, so that feedback, practice, and relevance are designed in rather than added on. Because each episode feeds forward into the next, the recursive spiral of the 4Rs becomes visible as learners revisit earlier outputs, refine interpretations, and expand conceptual networks over time. This spiral structure strengthens progression by ensuring that new insights do not remain isolated but become resources for continued Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding across successive episodes.

3.2 Alignment of deeper learning episodes and the 4Rs

The design of DLEs rests on a principle of alignment: each phase of an episode is purposefully mapped to one of the four interrelated practices of the 4Rs Framework. This alignment ensures that the mechanics of deeper learning—internalisation of conceptual knowledge and automatization of skills—unfold in tandem with the drivers of deeper learning, such as engagement, relevance, and reflection (Coyle and Meyer, 2021). What emerges is a recursive cycle in four phases—activation, surface, consolidation, and transfer—in which each phase is characterised by a distinctive form of meaning-making, and where the “outputs” of one phase become inputs for the next.

In the *surface phase*, learners acquire foundational knowledge and skills that provide the basis for deeper learning. As described in *Beyond CLIL*, this stage involves moving from initial encounters with new content toward forming first mental models by “connecting the dots” across facts, observations, and representations (Lantolf and Poehner, 2014; Novak, 2002). At this stage, reading is primarily orienting and exploratory: learners build a baseline understanding of the issue, key concepts, and relevant language, and begin to notice what they still need to find out. To deepen their understanding, teachers

TABLE 2 Ten principles for task fidelity in pluriliteracies pedagogy: these principles function as a flexible heuristic set that teachers can adapt in scope and emphasis within and across episodes.

Principle	Description
1. Ensuring relevance (personal, disciplinary, civic, affective)	Making the “why” visible by connecting content not only to learners’ identities, present/future lives, and global-local challenges, but also to their sense of belonging, well-being, and motivation.
2. Building disciplinary practices and discourses for the languages classroom	Apprenticing learners into the genres, registers, and multimodal resources needed for meaning-making within and across languages.
3. Deepening understanding and scaffolding languaging	Structuring tasks and dialogue so learners progressively refine, extend, and connect conceptual schemata, while scaffolding their ability to express and communicate that understanding through another language. This also means creating space for affective engagement, so that feelings of joy, curiosity, or frustration are acknowledged as part of the learning process.
4. Designing transparent transfer pathways	Sequencing abstraction and contextualisation and schema-building so learners can carry knowledge and strategies across tasks, topics, and settings, deepening and extending their understanding.
5. Mentoring growth with structured scaffolding and assessment	Providing deliberate practice, timely feedback (plus feed-up and feed-forward), and targeted supports that normalise iteration and improvement. Using assessment for, as, and of learning to sustain progression while recognising affective factors such as confidence, resilience, and optimism.
6. Making learning visible across languages, modes and texts	Enabling learners to demonstrate what they know and can do across languages, modes, and texts at multiple points so progression is documented and can be revisited and celebrated as a source of pride and motivation.
7. Individualising and differentiating learning pathways	Creating space for learner flourishing by offering choice and varied pacing, enabling outputs that reflect interests, strengths, and needs through both shared disciplinary goals and individual worlds.
8. Tracking progression along the 4Rs	Using clear indicators for Reading (lateral → vertical → intertextual), Repositioning (multiperspectival mapping and stance-taking), Reflecting (epistemic humility/fluency; reflective judgement and affective awareness), and Responding (audience-aware production; civic agency).
9. Embedding purposeful Reflecting throughout	Building cycles of metacognition+affect (bias checks, standpoint revision, dialogic exchange, emotional resonance) that link epistemic work to reflective orientation.
10. Designing for co-construction and authentic audiences	Creating opportunities for learners to co-construct understanding with peers and teachers, and to share their responses with meaningful audiences—inside or beyond the classroom—in ways that connect learning with real-world voices, perspectives, and concerns.

and learners must then decide which directions to take and which subtopics to pursue in order to expand their knowledge of the topic. This decision point marks the transition into consolidation, where learners select which texts merit close attention and which can be set aside.

The consolidation phase begins with lateral reading (McGrew and Byrne, 2022; Wineburg et al., 2016, 2020): stepping outside a single text to trace its origins and credibility, compare sources, and establish trustworthiness. Importantly, Kozyreva et al. (2023) argue that in an era of information overload, critical ignoring—the ability to quickly dismiss irrelevant, manipulative, or low-quality sources—is as essential as critical evaluation. These practices function as a threshold into consolidation within a multiple-text model (Goldman et al., 2016): they help learners identify a manageable set of credible, relevant texts for deeper study. From this perspective, digital literacies are not a separate construct but an integral component of disciplinary literacies: evaluating sources, deciding what to ignore, and navigating multimodal information streams are all part of learning to think and act like disciplinary experts.

Consolidation then involves vertical reading, where learners slow down to examine texts in depth, tracing conceptual structures, disciplinary vocabulary, and ideological underpinnings. Having identified credible and relevant texts through lateral reading, they now analyse how arguments are developed, how evidence is mobilised, and how perspectives are positioned. Crucially, multiperspectival understanding only emerges when vertical reading is applied across texts that embody different epistemic positions—for example, contrasting how an NGO testimony, a news report, and an academic article frame the same issue. In this phase, Reading and Repositioning operate together: comparative vertical reading deepens understanding whilst also supporting learners in decentring, noticing assumptions, and articulating evolving stance. As elaborated in our discussion of Repositioning, such comparative vertical reading enables the internalisation of disciplinary knowledge and supports the automatization of genre-specific strategies through deliberate practice. Because automatization depends on repeated, structured rehearsal, consolidation deepens when we include deliberate practice activities that help learners deploy strategies and conceptual tools more fluently and flexibly across contexts.

Consolidation is therefore both cognitive and epistemic: learners strengthen conceptual networks, refine their capacity to think with and through disciplinary language, and cultivate the discernment to situate knowledge claims within broader ethical and ideological frames, preparing the ground for Reflecting as the next phase in the 4Rs cycle.

In the *transfer phase*, lateral and vertical practices intersect in critical integrative argumentation. Nussbaum (2020) has argued that the aim of critical thinking instruction is to move students beyond binary oppositions toward complexity, where they can integrate multiple, even conflicting perspectives into coherent argumentation. This resonates with recent calls for post-truth pedagogy (Howat et al., 2022), which emphasise equipping learners to weigh claims, evaluate motives, and reason across epistemic divides.

It also requires transfer tasks to make space for epistemic humility by inviting learners to refine or revise their stance,

acknowledge uncertainty, and justify claims with ethical and epistemic awareness.

At this stage, Reflecting becomes pivotal: learners revisit and refine their own positioning, balancing openness to alternative viewpoints with ethical discernment. In turn, Responding translates epistemic complexity into action through the creation of outputs—texts, discourses, or interventions—that address authentic audiences and civic concerns. Such responses need not be large-scale; they may take the form of small but meaningful contributions that connect classroom learning to learners' everyday lives. Crucially, these outputs are not endpoints. Rather, they become resources for transfer: they feed forward into subsequent cycles of Reading, Repositioning, and Reflecting, sustaining the recursive spiral of deeper learning that characterises DLEs. Progression across these cycles becomes visible when learners' outputs demonstrate increasing conceptual depth, textual fluency, and epistemic fluency. These dimensions are traced through the indicators of the 4Rs, which together provide a basis for assessing how understanding and the ability to communicate that understanding develop over time.

While Table 3 outlines the conceptual alignment of DLE phases with the 4Rs, this alignment is enacted pedagogically through the kinds of questions that frame inquiry at each stage (cf. Table 4). Such questions do more than guide comprehension: they signal epistemic expectations, shape learners' stance toward texts, and foreground the ethical and civic orientations that underlie pluriliteracies for global citizenship. They range from establishing foundational knowledge, through evaluating and comparing sources, to integrating perspectives and responding with civic agency. In this way, key questions translate design principles into dialogic practice, sustaining recursive cycles of deeper learning through purposeful engagement.

In line with our pluriliteracies pedagogy, these questions are posed both by teachers and learners. For learners, they are phrased in simple, dialogic terms that invite curiosity and self-assessment (“What do I already know?”, “Is this source trustworthy?”, “What have I learned from juxtaposing these texts?”). For teachers, they serve as design prompts that foreground knowledge-building, demonstration of understanding, co-construction, and support. Together, they elicit individualised outputs that reflect learners' interests, strengths, and areas for growth. These outputs—oral presentations, digital media products, essays, or multimodal artefacts—make understanding visible at each phase and provide rich opportunities for feedback, feed-up, and feed-forward (Coyle and Meyer, 2021; Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Moreover, they themselves become resources for transfer, as products generated in one phase or episode can be revisited, reinterpreted, or extended in subsequent spirals of deeper learning. In this way, questions serve not only as cognitive prompts but also as design levers for differentiated, recursive, and feedback-rich learning.

Whilst Tables 3, 4 outline the conceptual and procedural alignment of DLEs with the 4Rs, the following classroom vignette illustrates how this alignment can take shape in practice:

For example, in a language class of 16-year-olds exploring migration narratives, learners first acquire a shared foundational understanding of the topic. Next, they engage in lateral reading

TABLE 3 Refined alignment of DLE phases and the 4Rs.

Deeper learning episode phase	Matched 4Rs component	Rationale for alignment
Activation (stands alone)	–	Sets the stage, generates curiosity, activates prior knowledge, and frames relevance to build engagement.
Surface	Reading (orientation + baseline meaning-making to establish shared ground)	Learners build foundational understanding of the issue, key concepts, and relevant lexis, structures, genres and modes. Reading here is exploratory, preparing learners to decide what to investigate further.
Consolidation	Reading (lateral reading + critical ignoring → vertical reading) & Repositioning	Consolidation begins with lateral reading and critical ignoring to select credible, relevant texts within a multiple-text model. Learners then engage in vertical reading across contrasting texts and perspectives, deepening conceptual understanding and developing multiperspectival stance through Repositioning.
Transfer	Reflecting + Responding (Intertextual Reading)	Learners juxtapose multiple texts, evaluate conflicting viewpoints, and engage in critical integrative argumentation, weighing and integrating perspectives into a more complex, evidence-grounded understanding. This requires Reflecting to refine one's stance with ethical discernment and Responding to translate epistemic complexity into civic engagement through authentic multimodal outputs and actions (e.g., counter-texts, podcasts, campaigns). These feed forward into subsequent episodes, sustaining the recursive spiral of deeper learning.

by comparing NGO testimonies, a newspaper editorial, song lyrics, and excerpts from a novel, alongside posts from social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Truth Social. During vertical reading, they analyse how each text frames agency and belonging against the backdrop of current debates in Europe and the United States, where migrants are often blamed for complex social and economic challenges. Reflecting, students discuss how empathy and bias shape their own interpretations before Responding through a multilingual podcast that juxtaposes personal and collective stories of movement and home. In the transfer stage, they revisit their work to ask what these insights might mean for their own community and school—for example, how narratives of inclusion or exclusion circulate locally, and how they themselves might contribute to a more welcoming environment.

This sequence illustrates how a DLE unfolds through recursive cycles of the 4Rs, connecting textual, ethical, and civic understanding to responsible engagement with pressing global issues and their local realities. At the same time, it shows how language-as-discipline provides its own rich content base: texts, genres, and perspectives become the material for inquiry and meaning-making, without reliance on external subject topics. In this sense, the 4Rs Framework empowers the language(s) classroom to function as a discipline in its own right, where global and local issues are explored through the epistemic, aesthetic, and ethical resources of language itself. Because these issues appear in stories, media, and public discourse, the language(s) classroom becomes a natural site for exploring how they are framed, how perspectives are positioned, and how learners can build bridges across interpretive divides.

The choice of global issues in the language(s) classroom is necessarily selective and pedagogically grounded. Language education does not aim to teach the substantive content of subjects such as Geography, Politics, or Biology; rather, it offers the epistemic, aesthetic, and ethical resources through which such issues are encountered, interpreted, and debated. As recent

work in foreign-language global citizenship education shows (e.g., Jackson, 2023; Lütge et al., 2023; Starkey, 2023), global challenges become meaningful for learners when approached through the texts, narratives, metaphors, and multimodal representations that circulate in public culture—poems, short stories, films, news media, social media genres, or digital microtexts. These discourses provide fertile ground for practising intertextuality, epistemic decentring, and ethical perspective taking. They also allow learners to examine how global issues are framed, contested, or imagined across cultural and ideological contexts, and to practise connecting across perspectives and echo chambers through reflective dialogue. In this sense, the language(s) classroom becomes a uniquely suitable space for exploring global issues through the symbolic, epistemic, and ethical affordances of language itself.

4 Towards a pluriliteracies pedagogy for global citizenship in the language(s) classroom

The practical implementation of the 4Rs gains additional depth when situated within broader debates on disciplinary literacies. The framework of Doing, Organising, Explaining, and Arguing (DOEA) offers an important point of comparison because it makes visible how disciplinary knowledge is constructed and communicated through recurring activity domains and their associated genres. In subjects such as the natural sciences, DOEA helps specify the kinds of actions and text types through which learners develop disciplinary understanding (Polias, 2016; Veel, 1997). The language-as-discipline classroom, however, cannot simply adopt this structure unchanged. Here, the central challenge is not to reproduce the knowledge-construction procedures of other subjects, but to identify the distinctive practices through which learners construct, interpret, re-evaluate, and communicate

TABLE 4 Key questions for each phase of a DLE.

DLE phase	Guiding questions for teachers	Key questions for learners
Activation	How can I activate prior knowledge and situate it in relevance?	What do I already know?
	What and whose problem do I want my learners to walk in—and how will I make those perspectives accessible?	Whose problem is this—and what makes it a problem for them?
	How can I foster engagement and frame the questions that will drive inquiry?	Why might this matter to me and to others?
	What do I want my learners to know or do? How can I make clear how we will think and work together during this Deeper Learning Episode?	What questions do I bring to this topic?
Surface	What new knowledge and (language) skills do learners need to begin understanding this topic?	Do I understand the basics well enough to move on?
	How will learners show that they have grasped foundational knowledge before moving forward?	What else do I need to know, or would I like to explore further?
Consolidation	How do I scaffold lateral reading and embed critical ignoring as a disciplinary practice?	Is this source trustworthy? Who is behind it? What do other sources say?
	How can I design checkpoints that help learners self-assess readiness to deepen understanding?	Is this text worth my attention, or should I ignore it?
	How can I design opportunities for vertical reading across multiple epistemic positions?	What are the key ideas and themes?
	How will I know learners are beginning to internalise concepts and automatise strategies?	What choices has the author made, and why?
	What collaborative structures (dialogue, peer review, co-writing) can help deepen understanding? How can I support learners in <i>reflecting on and through language</i> ?	What assumptions underpin this text?
	How do I scaffold deliberate practice and ethical judgement in analysis?	What have I learned by comparing texts with different perspectives?
Transfer	What kinds of integrative argumentation tasks will push learners beyond binary oppositions?	What have I learned from juxtaposing these texts? Is there room for consensus? How has my understanding changed?
	How will I know learners can transfer their knowledge? What authentic products and actions (e.g., counter-texts, podcasts, campaigns) will evidence this? How can I help learners consider whether their responses are respectful, responsible, and grounded in evidence?	Is this relevant to other contexts? How does this affect us and our community? How can we respond?
	How can I mentor learners to see their outputs and actions as resources for future cycles of spiral learning?	Where do I go from here?
	Thinking: How are learners' explanations, interpretations, or evaluative criteria changing? Feeling: Do learners show new forms of empathy, concern, discomfort, or curiosity? Saying: Are learners talking or writing differently about the issue—with classmates, families, or online? Doing: Are learners trying something new, adjusting habits, or collaborating on small-scale actions? Having: What new epistemic or plurimodal repertoires (concepts, language, strategies, resources) are visible in their work? Being: Do learners express shifts in how they see themselves as readers, interlocutors, or citizens?	How might this change the way I think, feel, speak, act, and see myself?

Adapted from research on civic online reasoning, multiple-text reading, critical argumentation, and post-truth pedagogy (see Coyle and Meyer, 2021; Goldman et al., 2016; Howat et al., 2022; Kozyreva et al., 2023; McGrew and Byrne, 2022; Nussbaum, 2020; Wineburg et al., 2016, 2020).

1. Lateral reading and critical ignoring are positioned at the entry to the consolidation phase. Once foundational understanding has been established in the surface phase, learners begin to select credible and relevant texts for deeper study. These evaluative practices serve as the threshold between Surface and Consolidation, preparing learners for vertical reading, Repositioning, and Reflecting as the cycle of deeper learning unfolds.

2. Reflecting on language refers to analysing how linguistic and multimodal choices shape meaning (e.g., lexis, grammar, discourse structure, stance, genre). Reflecting through language refers to using linguistic and multimodal resources as tools for reasoning, justification, and ethical or epistemic positioning. Together, these practices link textual, epistemic, and ethical fluency by helping learners articulate, refine, and communicate evolving understandings.

meaning. In this sense, the 4Rs can be understood as the language-as-discipline equivalent of DOEA: a framework that specifies the major practices through which deeper learning is organised in the language(s) classroom.

Developed within systemic functional linguistics (SFL), DOEA was systematised by Polias (2016) in science education and draws on a wider body of scholarship on disciplinary genres. Veel (1997) showed how scientific discourse is shaped by these domains, and Coffin (2006a, 2006b) applied comparable insights to history, showing how learners progress from recounting events to constructing explanations and ultimately engaging in historical argument. Taken together, these works clarify how disciplinary knowledge is constructed through characteristic genres—a disciplinary logic that informs, but does not determine, our own reframing in the 4Rs Framework.

In our work, the 4Rs Framework reworks the idea of activity domains for the language-as-discipline classroom. Rather than modelling how scientific or historical knowledge is constructed, the 4Rs articulate a set of disciplinary practices specific to this domain through which learners engage with texts, shift perspective, reflect with epistemic humility, and enact civic and creative agency. While DOEA illuminates how disciplinary knowledge-making is structured through characteristic genres, the 4Rs translate the epistemic, relational, and ethical work of language-as-discipline into pedagogical practice within the plurimodal and intercultural affordances of the language(s) classroom. Each R contributes to this process in a distinct way: Reading through analysing and synthesising plurimodal texts; Repositioning through decentring and interrogating assumptions; Reflecting through examining how knowledge is constructed and situated; and Responding through expressing understanding and participating with purpose. Within this integrated set of practices, the 4Rs also integrate three forms of reading—lateral, vertical, and intertextual—to support learners in evaluating credibility, deepening disciplinary understanding, and integrating multiple perspectives. Together, these interconnected practices make visible how learners move between Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding as they construct understanding and practise civic agency. Taken together, these practices raise a further question central to pluriliteracies pedagogy: how learners' repertoires develop over time.

In this sense, progression in pluriliteracies is best understood in multidimensional terms. It builds on the internalisation and automatised processes described earlier, encompassing the refinement of conceptual knowledge and the expansion of linguistic repertoires across genres and modes, as well as the deepening of civic and ethical awareness in relation to global challenges. Here, the work of Byrnes (2002, 2011, 2014) is particularly instructive. She has shown that progression in language learning is best traced in learners' expanding ability to mobilise increasingly complex linguistic resources to participate in disciplinary discourses—moving from novice to expert-like performances of academic genres. Her research underscores that linguistic progression is inseparable from conceptual and epistemic development.

In the 4Rs Framework, this linguistic trajectory is complemented by the cultivation of epistemic fluency, empathy, and responsibility that underpin global citizenship. By drawing on DOEA's disciplinary insights while extending them through the

4Rs, we argue that pluriliteracies pedagogy not only equips learners with the epistemic and plurimodal repertoires needed for deeper learning but also makes space for them to practise global citizenship in the language(s) classroom. Growth is therefore linguistic, conceptual, and civic: learners refine their knowledge and skills, broaden their communicative repertoires, and strengthen their capacity to act responsibly in an interconnected world. Yet none of this can be realised if the affective dimension of learning is neglected. Foley (2025, p. 137) argues that critical literacies, while essential for analysing power and inequality, are enriched when they move beyond predominantly cognitive orientations to “the interconnectedness and diverse ways of making meaning between self and others”, engaging with emotions such as “joy, pride, suffering or betrayed hope”. Her call to foreground affect signals that classrooms should not only be sites of critique but also of recognition, belonging, and optimism.

For pluriliteracies pedagogy, this means that engaging with global challenges is balanced by learning experiences that cultivate well-being, creativity, and enjoyment. Linking this to the OECD's (2025) work on flourishing—understood as holistic well-being and development—we contend that deeper learning in the language(s) classroom embraces not only what learners know and can do, but also how they experience learning as joyful, hopeful, and empowering. In this way, the 4Rs Framework integrates the cognitive, ethical, and affective dimensions of growth that together underpin creative and responsible global citizenship.

4.1 Implications and future research

The present article consolidates the theoretical foundations of the 4Rs Framework and outlines its pedagogical design potential. In parallel, the current ECML project Pluriliteracies for Global Citizenship is developing the implementation strand of this work through empirically grounded descriptors for Reading, Repositioning, Reflecting, and Responding, alongside age- and level-sensitive pedagogical examples and other resources for teachers and teacher educators. These developments will support adaptation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), while also informing teacher education curricula across Europe.¹

At the same time, research in our universities explores how pre-service and in-service teachers interpret and operationalise the 4Rs when designing materials, identifying where conceptual scaffolding and exemplification are most needed. Together, these lines of inquiry form the emerging empirical strand of the pluriliteracies research programme, linking conceptual development with evidence from classroom practice. In turn, such participatory research will contribute to the dissemination of the 4Rs Framework to partners within the extended network of ECML projects, ensuring that the insights generated through this research inform both policy and classroom practice. As with

¹A first version of the 4Rs descriptors, developed within the ECML project “Pluriliteracies for Global Citizenship,” is available on the project website: <https://www.ecml.at/en/ECML-Programme/Programme-2024-2027/Pluriliteracies-for-global-citizenship>.

any pedagogical framework, the 4Rs remain open to refinement with teachers, researchers, and learners; their value lies as much in the dialogue they generate as in the structures they propose.

Looking ahead, we see the 4Rs as both a pedagogical framework and a research agenda. For teachers, they offer design principles for building dynamic spirals of deeper learning that integrate disciplinary knowledge, intercultural sensitivity, civic agency, and attention to learners' personal and affective growth. For researchers, they invite systematic study of how task fidelity, progression, transfer, and flourishing unfold when pluriliteracies pedagogy is enacted in diverse contexts. And for learners, the 4Rs model makes clear that language(s) classrooms are not peripheral but central to preparing future citizens—capable of reasoning across divides, engaging responsibly in digital and face-to-face contexts, and contributing creatively and optimistically towards more just, sustainable, and flourishing futures. In doing so, the 4Rs help to break down the walls of the classroom itself, connecting what is learned within it to the world beyond, and affirming the language(s) classroom as a space where global citizenship is not only discussed but practised. Implementation can be gradual and context-sensitive: teachers may begin with a single episode or limited outputs and extend the scope as confidence, collaboration, and local affordances grow.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/Supplementary Material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

OM: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. DC: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. MA: Writing – review & editing, Visualization. SM: Writing – review & editing. KJ-L: Writing – review & editing. KS: Writing – review & editing.

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