

## Implementing Multimodal Literacy to Improve Students' Ability in Literacy for Classroom Practice

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**Abstract:** The goal of this research was to find out how multimodal literacy can help pupils improve their reading skills. The changing nature of communication has underlined the importance of students developing multimodal literacy. Even though the traditional method of asking a series of questions to elicit students' comprehension has helped build reading and comprehension skills, teachers could provide more support in the form of language, pedagogical scaffolds, and technological tools to develop students' critical viewing of multimodal texts. This study is qualitative in nature. Interviews, observation, and documentation were used to gather information. Systemic functional theory, multimodality, and media studies are all used to inform the method. The researchers outline the teaching technique as well as the study that was undertaken to help students achieve multimodal literacy. New descriptors of language and literacy standards are offered within the framework of multimodal literacy, which is the literacy required in today's society for reading, seeing, responding to, and producing multimodal and digital texts.

**Keywords:** multimodality, multimodal literacy, reading, systemic functional theory.

### INTRODUCTION

We've seen a remarkable surge in the study of multimodal literacies in recent years, as scholars have identified the various ways 21st-century students generate, communicate, and absorb meaning (Cordes, 2009; Heydon, 2007; Mills, 2010). While the abundance of material has captivated our curiosity, figuring out how to make our classrooms more "multimodal" has proven difficult for some—especially in light of growing pressure to raise test scores in order to meet Adequate Yearly Progress targets. We examine presenting strategies and instructional activities used in our secondary language arts classes to gain insight into the topic of multimodal literacy instruction (Sewell and Denton, 2011).

The Ministry of Education and Culture declared a school literacy movement in 2013 by Ministerial Regulation number 23 of 2013, with the goal of assisting students in developing a culture of reading and writing in the classroom. The School Literacy Movement is an activity that focuses on improving students' reading and writing skills by incorporating all parts of the educational ecosystem (principals, instructors, students, parents/guardians, and the community). According to Alwasilah, (2012), teaching literacy essentially results in persons who are functionally competent of reading and writing, as well as educated, intellectual, and appreciative of literature. This is because Indonesian education has been able to generate graduates who are educated but lack a literary understanding.

Teachers who have been teaching for quite long time would attest to the fact that their role in developing and delivering curriculum has grown significantly as the Internet and other ICTs have altered classroom teaching and learning. Teachers today develop, house, and present the desired curriculum for their classrooms utilizing digital tools and technological platforms, compared to 15 years ago. Furthermore, new digital media environments provide different types of text, networked communication, and multimedia composition, necessitating the development of evolving ICT and multiple mode design capabilities (multimodal literacy) in addition to proficiency in reading and writing traditional print texts. As a result, students now need to learn how to read, view, write, and produce multimodal texts. New navigation ideas, understanding, and design abilities, as well as highly valued, traditional literate indicators for enhancing reading and writing practices in schools, are required.

At the time, literacy activities were seen as a must that every primary school student must master. Students' ability to undertake critical analysis, such as conducting interviews, analyzing the surroundings, writing reports, and making observations, is emphasized in high school literacy (Widodo, 2015). This activity can be done by students writing in a book and then presenting it to the class, or by exhibiting the results of observations in the classroom. One of the method

to improve students' ability in literacy is by using multimodal literacy.

The phrase of multimodal literacy was first introduced by M. A. K. Halliday in his theory about systemic Functional Linguistics. Many children's knowledge creation has shifted away from static, written text and toward dynamic texts accompanied by noises and pictures, according to multimodal literacy. Furthermore, knowledge development is significantly more social and thus dependent on context (Heydon, 2007). "This is an age of multimedia authorship," writes Kathy A. Mills, "where skill with written words is still important, but it is no longer all that is required to participate effectively in the many realms of life" (36). This indicates that teachers should move away from traditional literacy approaches and toward multimodal instruction, in which texts are provided in a number of media, including "cards, books, movies, web sites, and video games, among others" (Cordes, 2009).

Multimodal literacy is a means of generating meaning from multimodal texts, such as written language, visual images, and design elements, from a variety of perspectives to meet the needs of certain social circumstances (Serafini, 2014). Approaches to improve students' multimodal literacy should take into account not only an individual's perceptual and cognitive ability, but also how visual pictures and multimodal texts function in larger sociocultural contexts, as well as how looking behaviors influence our lives and identities (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Rather of focusing on modalities or multimodal texts, we should investigate what they do. Understanding how discrete sign systems or separate modes articulate and express meaning potentials, as well as how meaning is formed as these sign systems interact, is a key component of multimodal literacy. To put it another way, we must consider how multimodal texts function intramodally (how meaning is formed inside modes) as well as intermodally (how meaning is constructed across modes) (Unsworth, 2006)

The technologicalization of school literacies and pedagogy has been the subject of extensive investigation (e.g., Cope & Kalantis, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Marsh, 2005; Unsworth. *et al.*, 2005). It investigates and theorizes the landscape of image-text relationships in literacy narratives, the connections among book- and computer-based styles of texts, and the part of

various online societies in the review, understanding, and cohort of new systems of multimodal and digital narratives and literacies. Jewitt, (2008) defined that this work frequently describes new forms of literacy, such as blogging and cultural jamming, in an attempt to remap the landscape of new literacies and the kinds of behaviors that let people travel across it (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Sefton-Green & Sinker, 2000).

Although multimodal research and multiliteracies are typically associated with the introduction of new technology, this point of view is also applicable to the assessment of older classroom instruments. These techniques have been used to explore how teachers use various modal resources in the classroom, including as gesture, gaze, stance, posture, action with books and boards, and discussion. Furthermore, multimodal research has investigated how multimodal communication in the classroom mediates language policy, student identities, official curriculum, exams, and school knowledge (Bourne & Jewitt, 2003; Kenner & Kress, 2003; Kress. *et al.*, 2001, 2005).

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the descriptive qualitative method was applied. Qualitative research, according to Herman. *et al.* (2022), aims to gain a holistic understanding of phenomena encountered by research participants (Purba. *et al.*, 2022). The goal of this study is to measure students' literacy abilities in reading comprehension through the use of multimodal literacy. The term "multimodal literacy" is used in this study to refer to PISA's scientific literacy. The participants in the study were 36 first-graders from Elementary school in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra. The qualitative research method was applied in this study. Scientific literacy assessments, observation, and student reflective journals were used as data collection strategies. The information was then processed in stages, including data reduction, coding, data display, and conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Educators have been using multimodality analyses of students' consumption and production of texts in out-of-school contexts for many years to rethink how literacy is taught in school environments (e.g., Kendrick & McKay, 2004; Kress, 1996;). Much of this study has tried to help educators better understand how children generate meaning through drawing and play. Educators are encouraged to value multimodal meaning making

in students of all ages, including those who have already mastered the linguistic (written) mode, by viewing young kids' texts as multimodal texts that fall within a spectrum of literate communicative practices.

Multimodal texts include visual elements such as images, drawings, graphics, and even video in addition to the linguistic mode (i.e., words). Another communicative channel used to transmit meaning in video is sound, which can be utilized as a multimodal text or as part of one. In multimodal texts, space is also employed to express meaning, as the use of different layouts gives the author or illustrator with an additional communication tool.

The way educational policymakers and educators understand and use literacy theories has a direct impact on classroom teaching and learning. Students learn "what qualifies as literacy" through the process of "doing" literacy (Unsworth, 2001). Literacy is developed in the classroom through legitimizing and valuing various types of texts and interactions. Several literacies are challenging the current arrangement of traditional schooling. It raises issues regarding the relevance of dominant literacy models as they are now taught in the majority of schools around the world in connection to today's digitalized society's communication and technological needs. Miller, (2007) defined that in general, school literacy is chastised when it continues to emphasize limiting print- and language-based literacy concepts (Gee, 2004; Lam, 2006; Leander, 2007; Sefton-Green, 2006). What is referred to as new literacy practices at the school may be new to the school, but many young people in this environment are already familiar with them (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Young people's communicational environments are increasingly originating outside of school. This has demanded changes in family life, the traditional source of children's texts, allowing children to become knowledge producers and disseminators in novel ways (Carrington, 2005)

Finding a good framework in which to perform something new in the elementary curriculum is one of the most difficult problems. Many teachers are unfamiliar with multimodal literacy principles (which is a challenge in and of itself) and are confused where these concepts should be introduced in the curriculum. In a reading workshop setting, a seemingly natural fit would be during the reading and discussion of modern picturebooks; unfortunately, as students go

through the elementary grades, teachers tend to employ fewer and fewer picturebooks in their reading curriculum (Stafford; 2011; Serafini, 2015). If a commercial reading program is being used that does not include picturebooks, it may be beneficial to examine the multimodal resources available in picturebooks or textbooks used in social studies or science curricular areas, and to link these analyses to the creation of student reports and argumentative writing.

## CONCLUSION

The initial introduction of technology in the classroom proved challenging since we had to learn the software, teach our students a variety of applications, and adapt our teaching methods to be more multimodal in nature. However, once we improved our skills, we noticed that youngsters were more open to instruction and, as seen by test scores, learned more. Developing resources grew easier as we began to incorporate our outside literacies (movies, television shows, and music) into our class. Finally, we realized that assignments were more than just work; providing and receiving knowledge in a multimodal style became pleasant for both our students and ourselves.

Teachers can employ a variety of approaches in conducting literacy activities, according to suggestions that literacy activities can play a role in enhancing students' reading enthusiasm. This strategy can help pupils become more motivated to participate in literacy exercises. Additionally, engaging texts such as fairy tales or folklore can be used to assist pupils develop a habit of engaging in reading activities. Students should be more disciplined during the activity phase in order for the habituation of literacy tasks to go smoothly. It is hoped that if the habituation stage goes well, it would have a good impact on the development and learning stages, increasing pupils' enthusiasm in reading.

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