MULTIMODAL MEDIA IN ELT: BETWEEN INNOVATION AND IMPLEMENTATION IN INDONESIA CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This research examines the implementation of multimodal literacy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Indonesian secondary schools. Specifically, this research aims to explore how EFL teachers use multimodal strategies in their classrooms, the challenges they face, and the factors that influence their practice. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study employed semi-structure interview with three English teachers from different schools in South Sulawesi. The researchers used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to identify key patterns in teachers' experiences and perceptions. The researchers found that although teachers recognize the importance of multimodal literacy, its implementation varies from one class to another. The text-based materials are still dominant and teacher independence significantly influences the media preparation. Identified challenges included time constraints, infrastructure and digital proficiency. While some teachers creatively use tools such as VR/AR and interactive apps, the overall use of these technologies is still limited. The results of this study provide important insights on how multimodal teaching is practiced in Indonesian classroom.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, EFL Students, EFL Teaching, Multimodal Literacy, Multimodal Media

INTRODUCTION

In the growing context of English language teaching, the integration of multimodal literacy is becoming increasingly significant. Multimodal literacy refers to the ability to interpret and create meaning through multiple modes of communication, including linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural and spatial elements (Kress, 2003). This approach is in line with the reality of contemporary communication, where texts are rarely monomodal and often incorporate multiple semiotic resources to effectively convey meaning.

The integration of multimodal literacy in ELT offers many benefits. It increases student engagement, meets diverse learning styles, and reflects real-world communication practices. By utilizing multiple modes, teachers can provide richer and more inclusive learning experiences, encouraging critical thinking and creativity among students (Sutrisno et.al, 2023). In addition, multimodal approaches can bridge the gap between literacy inside and outside of school, making learning more relevant and meaningful (Yi, 2014).

In Indonesia, the national curriculum has recognized the importance of multimodal literacy. The "Merdeka Curriculum" emphasizes differentiated learning and encourages the use of diverse learning materials to accommodate students' diverse needs and contexts (BSKAP, 2022). Despite these policy advances, the actual implementation of multimodal literacy in classrooms still faces several challenges. Teachers often face obstacles such as

limited access to technology, inadequate training and time constraints, which hinder the effective integration of multimodal resources into their teaching practices (Fadhilah & Fitrawati, 2024).

Existing research has highlighted the potential and challenges of implementing multimodal literacy in ELT. For example, research suggests that although teachers recognize the benefits of multimodal approaches, they may lack the necessary support and resources to implement them effectively (Li, 2020). In addition, there is a need for more empirical research focusing on teachers' experiences and perceptions of multimodal literacy, particularly in the Indonesian context.

This study aims to examine how English teachers in Indonesia implement multimodal literacy in their classrooms and to identify the challenges and opportunities they face in the process. By conducting in-depth interviews with three English teachers from different schools, this study sought to provide insights into the practices, perceptions and factors that influence the use of multimodal resources. The main research question guiding this study is: How do English teachers in Indonesia implement multimodal literacy in their classrooms, and what challenges and opportunities do they face in its implementation?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. This approach allows the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, beliefs, and challenges in real-life contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study aimed to explore how Indonesian EFL teachers implement multimodal literacy in their classroom practices. Three English teachers from different public schools in South Sulawesi were selected as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted individually in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure participants' clarity. The interviews were then transcribed and translated into English for analysis. The transcribed data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, following their six-step framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study were obtained from three English teachers from different public school in South Sulawesi. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed five main themes related to the teachers' implementation of multimodal literacy in the classroom: (1) inconsistent integration of multimodal tools; (2) teacher autonomy in material design; (3) time and technology constraints; (4) persistence of text-based practices; and (5) innovation driven by digital tools.

Inconsistent Integration of Multimodal Tools

The findings shows that all three teachers recognize the importance of using multimodal tools in teaching process, such as text, images, audio, and video. Two teachers claimed that they are using them consistently in every teaching session, while one teacher used them only a few times per months. As one teacher stated:

> T3: "*Saya cukup sering menggunakan berbagai mode seperti teks, gambar, video, dan audio, hanya beberapa kali dalam sebulan, saya menyesuaikan dengan topik pelajaran yang akan saya ajarkan.*

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| I quite often use various modes such as text, images, videos, and audio several times a month, adjusting them according to the lesson topics I will teach. |

This inconsistent integration suggests that while teachers consider multimodal literacy to be important, its implementation depends on various factors, such as the specific subject matter, teaching objectives and possible access to resources and workload, as reflected in its different patterns of use. This is in line with Kress (2003), who emphasizes that multimodal pedagogy should be consistently integrated into daily teaching practices rather than applied sporadically.

Similar findings were reported by Fadhilah and Fitrawati (2024), who noted that although digital literacy was recognized as important, its implementation varied due to constraints such as infrastructure and limited time. Teachers working in schools with better facilities or stronger digital skills tend to implement digital tools more consistently.

Teacher Autonomy in Material Design

The data indicate that teachers play an active role in preparing multimodal materials. All three respondents reported preparing teaching media independently, either from home or by modifying existing materials. As one teacher stated:

T2: *Biasanya saya menyiapkan media pembelajaran di rumah, melakukan pengeditan pada materi yang sudah ada seperti menambah video atau gambar, serta mencari sumber materi tambahan melalui internet.*
| I usually prepare teaching media at home by editing existing materials, such as adding videos or images, and also by searching for additional resources on the internet. |

Interview findings show that teachers often prepare teaching media independently at home, modifying existing materials to include multimodal elements such as videos and images, and additional content with online resources. While not all media comes from the school, teachers combine what is available with self-developed content. This reflects a strong sense of teacher autonomy, in line with An & Mindrila's (2020) view that educators in learner-centered contexts often take the initiative to adapt resources. It also supports the findings of Yasin et al. (2024) that such autonomy fosters creativity and ensures materials are relevant to students' needs and the digital learning environment.

However, this autonomy also comes with additional workloads. Teachers report that preparing and modifying multimodal materials, often at home and outside of regular teaching hours, can be time-consuming and demanding. If not equipped with adequate institutional support or opportunities for collaboration, this level of autonomy can lead to teacher burnout (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Therefore, while autonomy encourages creativity and innovation in multimodal teaching, it also needs to be supported by the provision of adequate resources, access to shared media repositories and time allocated for collaborative planning.

Time and Technology Constraints

Despite teachers' enthusiasm for multimodal teaching, all teachers reported facing significant challenges related to time, technological infrastructure, and digital literacy. As one teacher stated:

T1: *Beberapa kendala utama yang saya hadapi dalam menggunakan media multimodal adalah kurangnya fasilitas yang memadai, keterbatasan dalam penguasaan teknologi, jaringan internet yang tidak stabil, serta terbatasnya akses ke sumber daya multimodal.*
| Some of the main challenges I face in using multimodal media are the lack of adequate facilities, limited technological skills, unstable internet connection, and restricted access to multimodal resources. |

The interview findings highlight the common challenges faced by teachers in using multimodal media in English language teaching, reflecting wider structural barriers in Indonesian schools. Limited facilities, unstable internet connections and inadequate access to multimodal resources are persistent problems, especially in under-resourced schools. As noted by Fadhilah & Fitrawati (2024), these constraints hinder the effective use of technology, despite the digital literacy and motivation of teachers. In addition, time constraints, especially when teachers have to prepare or adapt materials outside of teaching hours, further limit the consistent application of multimodal approaches. This is in line with Akram et al. (2022), who emphasize that even skilled educators will struggle if there is no adequate systemic support regarding infrastructure and time management.

Improving infrastructure and allocating dedicated time for material preparation are therefore crucial steps to overcoming these barriers and ensuring that multimodal literacy becomes a sustainable and effective component of English language teaching in Indonesian classrooms.

Persistence of Text-Based Practices

While all participants reported using a variety of multimodal tools, text-based materials remained the most frequently used. As one teacher stated:

T1: *Kalau media yang paling sering saya pakai biasanya teks, seperti buku cetak, e-book.*
| The type of media I use most often is usually text-based, such as printed books and e-books. |

This pattern indicates that teachers tend to rely on textual media, such as printed books and e-books, due to their familiarity, ease of access, and simplicity. Preparing and using text-based materials is often more manageable, especially when teachers face time constraints or technical challenges. As Kress (2003) suggests, despite the richer potential of multimodal approaches, there remains an institutional preference for traditional, text-centered instruction. This is further supported by Yi (2014), who noted that multimodal strategies in language teaching are often underutilized not because of a lack of awareness, but due to systemic adherence to conventional curriculum designs and assessment methods that prioritize written language.

Innovation driven by Digital Tools

Encouragingly, one teacher reported using advanced technologies such as Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR), in addition to interactive media like online quizzes and educational apps. As one teacher stated:

T2: *Saya kadang menggunakan VR/AR untuk pembelajaran tertentu*
| I sometimes use VR/AR for specific lessons. |

This indicates a growing interest in digital innovation within Indonesian EFL classrooms, although still in its early stages. Tools such as VR/AR can provide immersive

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language experiences, which are particularly effective for vocabulary development, cultural exposure, and contextualized learning (Chen, 2016; Lin & Lan, 2020).

However, such practices were limited to only one of the three participants, suggesting that access and training remain barriers to widespread adoption. As Anis & Khan (2022) noted, while digital innovation holds great potential for inclusive and engaging ELT, implementation often depends on teachers' digital confidence, school support, and the presence of a supportive tech culture.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the EFL teachers in South Sulawesi understand the importance of using multimodal media such as text, images, audio, and video. However, their use is not always consistent due to challenges like limited time, technology facilities, and access to learning resources. Teachers often prepare materials on their own, which adds to their workload. Text-based media remain the most commonly used because they are easier to access and prepare. Some teachers have started experimenting with new technologies like VR/AR, but this is still rare due to limited training and resources.

To better support teachers, schools need to improve technology infrastructure and internet access. Regular training and dedicated time for developing or adapting multimodal teaching materials are also essential to reduce teacher burden. With this support, the integration of multimodal literacy in English teaching can become more effective and sustainable.

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