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DEPLOYMENT MULTIMODALITY IN TEACHING CONVERSATION TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has had a significant impact on English language teaching practices, particularly in the teaching of speaking skills at the junior high school level. This study aimed to investigate the application of multimodality in teaching conversation to junior high school students and to examine students' views on its application. Multimodality refers to the use of various semiotic modes, including verbal, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial sources, to construct meaning in the learning process. This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design. Data were obtained through classroom observations and student responses during conversation learning sessions involving 25 ninth-grade students at SMP Ar-Riyadh in Cipanas. Findings indicated that teachers implemented multimodality by integrating videos, images, audio materials, gestures, and role-playing activities to support conversation learning. Students evaluated the multimodal approach positively, reporting increased motivation, better contextual understanding, and greater confidence in practicing English conversation. However, challenges such as limited technological resources and the need for teacher training were also identified. This study concluded that multimodality is an effective pedagogical approach for improving junior high school students' speaking skills and recommended its wider integration into EFL classroom practice.

Keywords: Multimodality, Teaching Conversation, EFL, Junior High School, Qualitative Study

INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, English learning requires methods that meet the needs of students living in a diverse world of communication. In their daily lives, text, audio,



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visuals, gestures, and digital media are integrated into the learning process. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the use of multimodality is considered a powerful way to increase student engagement in meaningful conversations and interactions, particularly in practicing speaking skills. Multimodality not only provides language material orally but also enriches students' understanding by using relevant and interactive media, which in turn helps students understand and respond to authentic dialogue situations.

According to Nur et al. (2023a) Multimodal communicative methods combine various forms such as writing, images, audio, and video to improve the effectiveness of English language teaching in EFL classrooms. This aims to facilitate students' understanding of conversational material in a deeper and contextualized manner. This approach is based on the principle that various semiotic sources support each other to produce richer and more interactive meanings than conventional methods that rely solely on text or speech (Nurviyani and Helmie 2023).

The use of multimodality in English teaching at the junior high school level shows that teachers who implement multimodal texts are able to create a more engaging and dynamic learning environment, especially in speaking skills. A study conducted by Wara Wahyuningrum & Setyaningsih (n.d.) describes how the use of multimodality in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the junior high school level can increase student engagement through a variety of modalities, and motivate teachers to find more creative ways to support students' speaking skills. This research finding provides clear evidence that multimodality has a positive influence on language learning in a comprehensive and contextual manner.

On the other hand, according to Ilmi & Dewi (2022a) a study using data to analyze students' opinions about the integration of multimodality in English learning revealed that most students responded positively to the use of this method in the teaching and learning process. The application of multimodality has proven effective in accommodating various learning styles and helps deepen understanding of conversational material. This is because students are not limited to just listening or reading but are also able to experience visual and audio elements that reinforce the material (J. Helmie 2015).

Thus, research on the deployment of multimodality in teaching conversation to junior high school students is important to be studied further, especially in the context of developing learning strategies that can improve students' speaking skills with a contextual, interactive, and responsive approach to students' needs.

Several previous studies have examined the application of multimodality in English language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). These studies have shown that the use of various semiotic modes



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can have a positive impact on student engagement, comprehension, and language skills, particularly speaking

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), multimodality emphasizes that meaning is constructed through a combination of various modes, such as verbal, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial language. This principle forms the basis of much language education research, which believes that learning that integrates various modalities is more effective than single- text-based learning. This theoretical framework is widely used in multimodal studies in language classrooms (Jauhar Helmie, Aminah, and Id 2023).

Other research In the EFL context, Ilmi & Dewi (2022b) examined the integration of multimodality in English classes and found that students had positive perceptions of the use of multimodal media such as video, images, and audio. This study showed that multimodality helped students better understand the material and increased their learning motivation.

More specifically at the junior high school level, Nur et al. (2023b) conducted a case study on the practice of multimodal texts by junior high school EFL teachers. The results showed that teachers who used multimodal materials were able to create more interactive and engaging learning, despite still facing challenges in understanding multimodal pedagogy and limited facilities.

Additionally, Septianing Putri et al. (n.d.) examined EFL teachers' perceptions of the use of multimodality and found that a multimodal approach helped students participate more actively in speaking activities. However, this study focused more on the teachers' perspectives and did not delve deeply into students' learning experiences in conversation practice.

Based on previous research, it can be concluded that multimodality has been widely implemented and proven effective in English language learning. However, there is limited research specifically examining how multimodality is applied in conversation teaching and

junior high school students' perceptions of this application in a specific classroom context. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the implementation and perceptions of junior high school students. How is multimodality implemented by the teacher in teaching conversation to Junior High School students? And How do students perceive the use of multimodality in learning conversation?

METHOD

The method used in this study was designed to examine in detail how multimodality is implemented in teaching conversation to junior high school students. This research adopted a qualitative approach because the goal was to understand the phenomenon of multimodal teaching, as well as teachers' perspectives and students'



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responses in a real classroom environment. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provided the researcher with the opportunity to delve deeply into learning practices and interactions between modalities that are difficult to measure with numbers or statistical data alone (Septianing Putri et al., n.d.).

In related research, several multimodal studies employ descriptive qualitative methods. Data collection is conducted through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and review of teaching materials. For example, in a study of teachers' opinions on the use of multimodal resources, researchers used interviews. The goal was to explore teachers' perspectives and practices when using various modalities in teaching EFL (English as a Foreign Language), such as text, audio, visuals, and other interactive elements.

The research data was collected using the following techniques:

1. Direct classroom observation, to observe multimodal interactions between teachers and students during speaking activities (conversations), including the use of audiovisual media, text, images, and gestures in learning activities.
2. Semi-structured interviews, to gain an in-depth understanding of strategies, teaching plans, and challenges faced in integrating multimodality into conversation activities.

According to Ilmi & Dewi (2022a) Information analysis was conducted in stages and thematically, utilizing thematic content analysis. In this stage, researchers evaluated qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and significant meanings emerging from observations and teacher and student responses. The analysis focused on how various modes of expression were used in classroom learning and how teachers and students understood the application of multimodality in conversational activities. This method was chosen because it can comprehensively illustrate the interaction of various learning modes.

Through this qualitative approach, the research is expected to provide a clear and contextual picture of the application of multimodality in teaching conversation in junior high schools, including the perceived benefits, obstacles encountered, and learning recommendations based on real practices in the classroom.

Participants & Setting (Respondents and Location)

1. Student respondents: 1 Junior High School class (25 students) in grade IX to ensure sufficient basic language skills.
2. Location: Ar-Riyadl Junior High School in Cipanas, Cianjur, West Java.



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3. Observation duration: 1 conversation learning session (40 minutes each), to capture variations in implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Multimodality in Teaching Conversation (RQ1)

Classroom observations show that teachers implement multimodality in a planned and integrated manner in conversation instruction by combining several semiotic modes—verbal, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial—which are used sequentially and complement each other within a single learning session. In the initial stages of learning, teachers utilize the verbal mode to introduce conversation topics, explain learning objectives, and provide instructions to students. They also provide examples of expressions and dialogue structures orally so students can understand the form and function of the language being studied. These verbal explanations serve as a foundation for students before they interact with other modes.

Next, the visual mode is implemented through the use of situational images and conversation videos that reflect the students' everyday life contexts, such as conversations in the school environment and simple social interactions. These visual media help students understand the context of language use, the conversational situation, and the role of the speakers in the dialogue, making the meaning of the conversation clearer and easier to understand.

The audio mode is used by playing dialogues in English relevant to the learning topic. Through this listening activity, students can pay attention to pronunciation, word stress, and intonation in the conversation. The teacher occasionally pauses the audio to provide additional explanations or invite students to imitate specific parts of the dialogue, ensuring that students are not simply passive listeners.

Furthermore, the teacher utilizes gestural modes through the use of facial expressions, hand movements, and body language when demonstrating dialogue. These gestures help clarify the meaning of expressions and support student understanding, especially when they encounter new vocabulary or expressions. The use of gestures also creates a more communicative and interactive classroom atmosphere.

Spatial modes are evident in the organization of learning activities. The teacher arranges students' seating and divides them into pairs or small groups to engage in role-playing activities. In these activities, students are asked to practice dialogues based on situations previously presented through visual and audio media. The spatial arrangement and interaction between students allows for more natural two-way communication. Overall, the application of multimodality in conversation learning is carried out continuously throughout the learning session, with each mode supporting each other to achieve learning objectives. This approach encourages students to actively engage in the speaking learning process, not only as recipients of information, but also as users of language in meaningful contexts.



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Students' Perceptions of Multimodality in Learning Conversation (RQ2)

Based on student responses during and after the learning process, the research results showed that most students had a positive perception of the use of multimodality in conversation learning. Students stated that learning that combines various media, such as images, video, audio, and role-play activities, makes conversation material easier to understand than learning that only uses textbooks or oral explanations.

In terms of understanding context, students felt that visual media, particularly situational images and conversation videos, helped them understand the situation and intent of the conversation more clearly. Students could see who was speaking, where the conversation was taking place, and what expressions were appropriate to use in certain situations. This helped students connect the language they were learning with real-life contexts.

In terms of learning motivation, students expressed that multimodality-based learning felt more engaging and enjoyable. The use of video and audio prevented monotony in the classroom, allowing students to focus more and be more enthusiastic about participating in learning activities. Several students stated that they were more enthusiastic about speaking English because learning was not solely teacher-centered but also involved interactive activities.

Furthermore, in terms of self-confidence, students felt more confident in practicing English conversation when supported by clear media and examples. Role-play activities that begin with audio and visual examples help students remember the vocabulary and expressions used, so they feel more prepared when speaking in front of their peers.

However, some students also expressed challenges in multimodal learning. Some students admitted they still had difficulty following English instructions, especially when activities involved digital media. Students with lower English proficiency required additional explanations from the teacher to effectively follow the activities. Nevertheless, students still felt that the use of multimodality helped them learn conversation more effectively.

Overall, students' perceptions of the use of multimodality in conversation learning were positive and constructive. Students assessed that this approach not only helped them understand the material but also increased their motivation, confidence, and active engagement in English learning in junior high school.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the application of multimodality in teaching conversation to junior high school students and examined students' views on its use in the learning process. The findings indicate that teachers implemented multimodality through the integration of verbal, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial media within a single learning session. These media were used in a complementary manner to support students' understanding of conversational context, language use, and communication practices.



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The results also revealed that students positively evaluated the use of multimodality. The integration of images, videos, audio materials, and role-playing activities helped students better understand conversational situations, increased their motivation to engage in speaking activities, and boosted their confidence in using English. Although some students experienced minor difficulties, particularly in following instructions and using digital media, the overall perception of multimodal learning remained positive.

In conclusion, the application of multimodality can be considered an effective pedagogical approach for teaching conversation in junior high school EFL classrooms. This approach supports active student engagement and facilitates meaningful language use in contextualized learning situations. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers integrate more multimodal strategies in teaching conversation by considering appropriate guidance and support to maximize learning outcomes.

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