Shaping the Way to Teach? Exploring the Adoption of Digital Multimodal Texts as Instructional Tools in EFL Teaching Practicum

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Abstract

This research scrutinizes a case study conducted with 15 pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in a microteaching class at the English Education Department at UIN Walisongo Semarang. The purpose of the study was to examine the forms, implementation, and reflection of digital multimodal instructional media utilized by pre-service teachers. Observations of classrooms and document analysis were employed to acquire data. Pre-service EFL teachers employ digital multimodal instructional media, including PowerPoint presentations, films, and songs, to enhance English language learning. These tools integrate text, images, video, and audio elements to teach language structures, vocabulary, and emotions effectively. Student portfolios showcase diverse educational strategies across different grade levels, using videos, songs, and PowerPoint presentations to engage students and reinforce language skills. Educator reflections underline the significance of digital multimodal media in simplifying complex topics, improving comprehension, and fostering a holistic learning experience. They also stress the importance of adequate equipment and resources for successful multimedia implementation, affirming the value of multimodal approaches in providing impactful and engaging English language education. The study highlights the potential for these digital tools to provide an engaging and interactive learning environment for EFL students. It is recommended that more research investigate ways for optimizing the use of digital multimodal media in diverse EFL teaching scenarios.

Keywords: digital multimodal media, pre-service teachers, engaging

INTRODUCTION

The issue of multimodality, which relates to the confluence of many forms of meaning construction (Kress, 2010), has attracted educators' attention worldwide (Yi et al., 2020). The expansion and pervasiveness of digital technology has led to the production of multimodal texts, as English as the primary mode of human communication necessitates the use of additional modes such as images, sounds, gestures, and even locations. It claimed that the rising availability and broad usage of digital technologies have led to an increase in multimodal text production. Language alone is insufficient to successfully communicate meaning in the modern world. There are numerous ways of human communication, including visual, aural, and tactile modes. To produce a rich and engaging communication experience, it is required to employ multimodal texts, which mix several modes of communication.

Studies on multimodal texts and relevant analysis tools have been done dealing with visual communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996); speech, music, and sound (Kress et al., 2006), on multimodal perspective on teaching and learning (Kress, 2003); visual, action, and linguistic communication (Jewitt et al, 2001) the interrelationship between images and written language (Bowcher, 2007); and perceptual, structural, and ideological perspective on multimodal texts; and visual images in multimodal texts (Serafini, 2015).

Digital multimodal instructional media refers to the integration of various forms of media, such as videos, images, audio, animations, and interactive elements, into instructional materials (Canale, 2019). These assets are accessible and usable via digital platforms, online resources, and educational software. Moreover, with the growing adoption of online learning environments, e-learning platforms, and digital resources, it has rapidly emerged as an important component of contemporary education. Educators can improve learning experiences and accommodate varied learning styles and preferences by incorporating multiple media types into their educational content.

Conceptualizing Multimodality

Multimodality is a prominent concept in

the fields of communication and education, including language teaching-learning. The concept of multimodality recognizes that language is not the only source of communication for some reasons, such as languages or words that may not provide rich expressions or meaning (Stein, 2000). This idea has been evidenced in which human communication is basically multimodal as it uses different modes such as gesture, stare, or facial expression (Peng, 2019). Multimodality is defined as using various modes of expression for communication and meaning-making (Kress, 2003; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016). In this sense, a mode is understood as a "regularized and organized set of resources for meaning-making, including, image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech, and sound-effect" (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 1). As such, the concept of multimodality acknowledges all modes of communication because different modes may have different affordances for meaning-making (Hafner, 2013). The use of multiple modes in communication is characterized as complementing, extending, and/or contradicting the meaning expressed (Kress, 2010). This is why understanding the importance of combining various modes of resources is critical for language learners and users (Early, Kendrick, Potts, 2015).

In the context of English language teaching, multimodality should not be viewed only on combining image and writing. Instead, all modes of communication should be taken into consideration to create meaning. The interaction of modes is closely connected with the notion of design. A design is defined as "the imagined projection of a complex, closely interrelated social array in which the design entity, object, process is used, has social effects, meanings; and produces affect" (Kress, 2010, p.137). The design characterizes meaning purposes and uses in attaining communicative purposes, in which Hafner (2014) accentuates the need for rhetorical strategy, a "goal-directed act" intended to accomplish communicative intent through making meaning of various modes. Hence, such a concept enables people to select any possible options to express and create meaning. This concept has been extended to the use of instructional media in English language teaching to enrich the learning experiences.

Defining Instructional Media

Media has been derived from medium which means "a means of effecting or conveying something" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 722). Chan et al. (2011) provide two sub-definition of media which cover a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment and something (such as a magnetic disk) on which information may be stored. They further propose five aspects of media namely hardware, software, symbol system, sensory channel, and messages. Hardware refers to the physical or material dimension of a medium, such as a computer, data projector or even a chalkboard, while software refers to "programme" that is transmitted through the hardware, such as a video film or a Flash animation. Symbol system is about the means by which the information transmitted is coded. This can be manifested into information which is coded through the symbol system of language within a text. Sensory channel captures the information carried by medium through eyes, ears, or hand. Message is the information transmitted through the symbol systems.

However, there is evidence that digital multimodal instructional media can be an effective method for teaching English as a second language (EFL). The study by Steven L. Thorne, Shannon Sauro, and Bryan Smith Thorne found that students who collaborated on a project using digital resources improved their language skills and were more involved in the learning process than those who completed the assignment individually (Thorne et al, 2015). One further study found that when two teachers used different types of media to supplement a printed text, the students learnt more, retained more of what they had learned, and felt safer in their classroom environment because of the use of multimodal teaching strategies (Choi & Yi, 2016).

To this end, enacting multimodality is essential since instructional development is a daunting effort, so finding a proper context in enacting multimodality within the curriculum is an imperative agenda (Serafini, 2015). Additionally, incorporation of multimodality within language classrooms has been situated in various fields such as assessment (Hafner & Ho, 2020) and assignment (Lim & Polio, 2020), but not much scholarships reporting the multimodal digital practice in practicum classroom especially by incorporating project-based learning.

Project-based learning has empirical evidence facilitating students to be productive in a teamwork through knowledge to problem transfer (Bell, 2010) through their initiative and critical thinking. This is one of the language learning goals that are required to be juxtaposed with multimodality which values critical and analytical instruction (Street, 2007). To fill the void, the present study attempts to provide empirical evidence

by showcasing the enactment of digital multimodal instructional media in EFL context.

METHODS

This research is intended to investigate the engagement of digital multimodal instructional media in which the goal leads to qualitative inquiry examining non-hypothetical questions and phenomena which occur in the classroom setting naturally. The nature of this study is case study research (Yin, 2003) as it investigates how and why inquiry or the research questions. In this stage, the class which consist of a group of people becomes the case. The study is epistemologically anchored in interpretivism paradigm, which perceives how realities are individually experienced by participants. This will reveal individual interpretation of reality which affects how they interpret social world. The participants of this study consist of 1 teacher and 40 students in a Language Teaching Media course. The course is a compulsory one for English Language Education students which has 2 credits. They agree to participate as evidenced by their signing the informed consent. These participants are recruited purposely as they are willing to be researched while the researchers have access from the gatekeepers.

The collection of empirical data is gathered through three categories namely observation; interviews, and reflections; and documentation of students' works. The observation is employed to reveal classroom phenomena and practice or performance. The interviews and reflection elucidate participants' experience and belief which at the same time become verbal justification of the classroom observation and the unclear investigation during the observation session. Finally, the documentation of student works is evidence of students learning artefact with digital multimodal instructional media.

All the data are analyzed using an interpretive and narrative approach. The step-by-step procedures of learning are narrated and interpreted to capture the relevant findings with research questions. The data gathered from interviews and reflection are analyzed using thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify the themes. This analysis becomes an analytical tool aimed for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (p.79). This analysis covers sequential steps started from familiarization with data, conducting initial codes, looking for themes among codes, reviewing themes, and finally defining and naming themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Analysis of the Enactment of Digital Multimodal Instructional Media

Several educational tasks can be conducted using digital multimodal media, according to the findings. The use of PowerPoint presentations to include video is integrated. Incorporating relevant movies into PowerPoint slides helps enhance the presentation's appeal. It offers a multimedia learning experience since it combines many media types and provides visual context for the knowledge. It confirms that PowerPoint presentations may be used to integrate a wide variety of material, including audio and video clips, into course content and have increased animation capabilities (Bertea, 2012).

As it is found that students embedded videos also from YouTube link https://youtu.be/1XY3Dcfjz8U provides examples of natural spoken English. of how to ask for and giving opinions in English. It related to a study examined the effects of segmented PowerPoint presentations on student learning and found that students who were exposed to an instructional lesson delivered with an animated PowerPoint presentation were better able to select and pay attention to appropriate learning material (Bolkan, 2019).

PowerPoint presentations facilitate the delivery of lectures. Teachers can utilize slides to create visual representations of concepts and to steer the progression of the session. The instructor may give a number of content kinds, such as definitions, descriptions, functions, and examples of Greeting Card, Asking for and Giving Opinion, Narrative and Descriptive Text, as revealed in the findings. It is consistent with research indicating that integrating health-related YouTube videos directly into PowerPoint presentations can be utilized to enhance the quality of educational resources available outside the classroom in order to increase student engagement with ideas and concepts (Cox, 2019).

The video is implemented as digital multimodal media in numerous ways. The selected video is implemented as Video Use Communication Models. As seen by the data, the teacher chose a film to demonstrate conversational and realistic language use when narrating a fairy tale. It can be used to assist teachers in selecting a tool that aligns with their educational objectives and to promote the usage of video solutions that provide affordable and accessible access for English teachers who wish to engage their students (McLain, 2018).

The use of digital storytelling video can

boost language learning: Research shows that video is a powerful and useful tool for educators to boost language learning in the classroom. By watching the video story of "The Princess and The Frog" in English, students can improve their listening and speaking skills, as well as their vocabulary and pronunciation. Digital Storytelling video can create active learning experiences for learners in learning literature components (Baharudin et al, 2019). By using the video story of "The Princess and The Frog" in English class, teachers can engage students in discussions about the story, its moral lessons, and character development, as well as conduct character analysis activities or assign writing tasks. Also, it provides a relaxing situation:

Using videos can give a relaxing situation for students in learning English (kamelia, 2019). By watching the video story of "The Princess and The Frog" in English class, students can enjoy the process of teaching and learning, and become more active and easier to understand the material since the video contains pictures and audio that causes students to see the material directly.

Songs are an engaging and effective medium for teaching English. Here are some learning activities that leverage songs for English instruction as exposed in the findings. The first is Lyric Gap Fill. Teacher provides students with the lyrics of a song, but leaves out certain words or phrases. As they listen to the song, students can fill in the missing words. This enhances listening comprehension and vocabulary recall. The second activities dealt with Vocabulary Highlight: Teacher pick out specific vocabulary words from a song's lyrics such as "dream" in the Westlife's song I have a dream. sk students to discuss their meanings, and then listen to the song. This can help reinforce the meaning and usage of these words. Beside doing previous activities. Teachers can encourage student participation by having students sing along with the song (Putri et al, 2022), perform actions, or create their own lyrics to the song.

The next activities found is that Song-based Discussions: After listening to a song, teacher engage the class in a discussion about its themes, emotions, and narrative. This can lead to a deeper understanding of cultural contexts, idiomatic expressions. as well as promoting cultural awareness (Yelnim & Kartawijaya, 2021).

The Analysis of the Reflection Digital Multimodal Instructional Media

The students' reflections on the use of videos in teaching, exemplified by the provided YouTube video containing Descriptive Text, present a nuanced perspective with both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, videos are praised for their ability to accurately illustrate complex processes, enabling students to revisit and better understand the material.

Video can Accurately illustrate complex processes and simulations through animation and visuals (Khomyshak, 2022). They are also noted for their capacity to boost student motivation, shape attitudes, and offer a flexible, interactive, and cost-effective means of learning (Mora & Coyle, 2023). However, challenges are apparent, such as the need for specialized facilities and the dependence on electricity (Dan, 2023), which may be problematic in areas with unstable power supplies. One specific concern highlighted in the reflections is the reliance on LCD screens, which significantly influences the effectiveness of video-based teaching. If LCD screens are not available, the text content in videos cannot be displayed, necessitating the use of traditional text materials as a fallback option. This underlines the critical importance of ensuring the availability of essential infrastructure when integrating video-based teaching methods.

Several advantages and disadvantages of using PowerPoint (PPT) presentations as a teaching tool are highlighted in the student's reflection. First, PPTs are lauded for their capacity to boost comprehension through a combination of text and visual assistance, so making complicated concepts more digestible (Hidayanti & Widya, 2018). This multimedia approach aligns with research that suggests individuals tend to learn more effectively when words and pictures are presented simultaneously (Alzayed & Alzamel, 2022). Moreover, they make the learning process more practical, which benefits both teachers and students by speeding instruction and concretizing abstract concepts. They can be used to emphasize a concept, augment a presentation visually in a manner that narration cannot, and engage learners (Penciner, 2013). Moreover, PowerPoint presentations stimulate participation, allowing students to immediately apply the knowledge they receive. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize the downsides. Students may need additional time to absorb rich or sophisticated text in PowerPoint presentations, which could hinder their learning efficiency. Moreover, practical issues occur regarding the content's visibility, particularly for pupils sat further away from the screen, stressing the significance of legible font and enough contrast in PowerPoint presentation. In conclusi-

on, this reflection provides a comprehensive analysis of the pros and cons associated with the use of PowerPoint presentations in the educational setting, highlighting their potential benefits while also acknowledging the challenges that must be addressed to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

In addition, the student's reflection examines the pros and cons of employing songs as a teaching technique in English language acquisition. Initially, the benefits demonstrate that introducing songs into the curriculum provides students with a novel and engaging learning experience, hence diversifying their educational journey beyond standard problem-solving (Diakou, 2013). Moreover, songs have the capacity to inject enthusiasm and delight into the learning process, so increasing the motivation of students. Research has shown that songs can significantly increase language acquisition, as demonstrated in a study conducted at Samuil Micu High School of Sărmașu, Romania (Camara & Naznen, 2022). In addition, songs frequently feature a vast diversity of vocabulary and sentence structures that might benefit in the acquisition and extension of vocabulary.

In contrast, the downsides highlight the difficulties connected with this strategy. Technical challenges, such as a weak signal or internet connectivity troubles, might interfere with the playback of songs, highlighting the reliance on technology. In addition, the logistics of preparing audio equipment and ensuring its proper operation may create obstacles for the incorporation of songs into the learning process.

In conclusion, the reflection provides a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits and drawbacks of using songs as a teaching tool for English language instruction, emphasizing the potential for engagement and motivation while acknowledging the technological and logistical considerations that must be addressed. In conclusion, these reflections collectively support the notion that digital media, such as videos, presentations, songs, and digital storytelling, offer rich and engaging educational experiences by leveraging multiple modes of communication to improve learning comprehension, motivation, and creativity.

CONCLUSION

The pre-service EFL teachers use PowerPoint presentations, films, and songs, among other digital multimodal instructional media. PowerPoint presentations are used to teach language structures, sequence markers, imperative sentences, and particular terminology, using text, images, and video increasing learning. Through animations, images, and voiceovers, videos taken from sources such as YouTube explain topics, vocabulary, and language use. Songs such as "I Have a Dream" by Westlife and "Yesterday" by The Beatles combine words, melody, and harmony to convey feelings and meanings. The song "Heal the World" by Michael Jackson is used to teach English by blending audio and text to emotionally engage students and improve comprehension. These digital multimodal media enhance language learning in a variety of ways, making the educational experience entertaining, complete, and efficient.

The data from the student portfolios demonstrate the diversity of approaches to teaching English using digital multimodal media at different educational levels. The purpose of the first scenario intended at high school pupils is to train them on the construction of simple descriptive paragraphs using a video example. The film is displayed on an LCD projector, and students are engaged in conversations and projects to reinforce their learning. In the second scenario, geared for middle school children, the emphasis changes to recognizing the use of simple present tense in transactional interaction texts. Students actively read and debate the text to identify instances of simple present tense while a movie is shown through an LCD screen as the instructional assistance. The objective of the third scenario, designed for high school pupils, is to assess the social function, text structure, and linguistic features of a cover letter. The instructor utilizes a PowerPoint presentation including a sample application letter, walking students through its structure and components before encouraging debate and analysis. In the fourth scenario, aimed for eleventh-grade high school students, the objective is to comprehend the context of high school-related song lyrics. Students engage in activities involving synonyms, antonyms, tenses, parts of speech, and meaning analysis after being provided the lyrics to a YouTube video by the instructor. Collectively, these situations illustrate the varied use of digital multimodal media to enhance English language instruction in a variety of educational contexts, so providing an engaging and dynamic learning experience.

The reflections underlined the need of employing digital multimodal media for successful and interesting learning in the classroom. They emphasize how videos, photos, and other forms of multimedia may clarify complex subjects, improve comprehension, and give a more com-

prehensive learning experience. For multimedia training to be successfully implemented, it is also essential to have the appropriate technology and resources. In addition, the reflections acknowledge the effectiveness of merging diverse modes, such as visual, aural, and textual components, to create a rich learning environment. Whether through films, visual aids, or music, these insights reinforce the need of multimodal approaches for engaging and meaningful instruction.

To increase English language learning, preservice EFL teachers utilize digital multimodal instructional media, such as PowerPoint presentations, films, and music. These resources integrate text, graphics, video, and audio to efficiently instruct language structures, vocabulary, and emotions. Using films, music, and PowerPoint presentations to engage students and bolster their language skills, student portfolios display a variety of instructional methods across school levels. Reflections of educators highlight the value of digital multimodal media in clarifying complicated topics, enhancing comprehension, and promoting an all-encompassing learning experience. Affirming the usefulness of multimodal approaches in offering relevant and engaging English language education, they also emphasize the need for adequate technology and resources for successful multimedia deployment.

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