

## Multimodal Media and Its Possible Application to Improve Reading and Writing of Students

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**Abstract.** *In this 21st century, most of the students come from the digital environment. It makes the students learning change from only printed to screen pages. In order to improve students' writing and reading literacies, teachers have to integrate technology into their English literacy classroom to make the students interested in learning English. In that classroom, the students will be exposed to multiple genres of texts and in the multimodal forms which combine words, images, and sounds as resources of learning. This paper describes how English literacy learning may be enhanced by using multimodal media. In teaching reading and writing, the teacher of English may use web-blogs, e-books e-journals, twitter, facebook, e-mail in addition to printed texts.*

**Key words:** *multimodal media; digital environment; English literacy; reading; writing*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Reading is the key of learning. By reading, people can get a lot of information. According to Aebersold (1997, p. 15), "Reading is what happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text." Therefore, the readers can get the meaning of what they read. This means that, reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret the meaning or information appropriately (Grabe & Stoler, 2002). Reading is also something crucial and indispensable for students because the success of their study depends on the greater part of their reading skills.

Reading also means making meaning from print and from visual information. However, it is not a simple activity. Reading is an active process that requires a great deal of practice and skill (Moreillon, 2007, p.12). According to Hillerich (1983, p. 125), “The major goal for any reading activities is comprehension”. However, to comprehend what is being read is not easy, especially if it is reading in a foreign language such as English. Therefore, students as readers need a comprehension strategy to understand the text they read because reading comprehension is an important aspect to develop students’ ability to read with understanding. This is supported by Barr, Sadow, and Blachwicz (1990) who state that reading is an active process in which readers interact with the text to reconstruct the message of the author or writer. In sum, reading comprehension is the reading activity which more thorough to understand the meaning, find the message of the text and reconstruct the idea of the reader. Therefore, in a reading process, students should understand the meaning of language that is used in text in order to comprehend the content of the text and state it by using their own words.

Furthermore, reading comprehension helps students form ideas that they can express in their writing. Writing can be such an exciting adventure for students who have a firm idea of what to write about and how to get started (Roberts, 2004, p.5). Furthermore, Roberts (2004, p.7) claims that learners are called successful learners when they are able to use the language in good written form. Similarly, Harmer (2004, p.245) believes that the use of coherent and cohesive composition is very important so that the readers understand what they write. Coherent writing makes sense because of the sequence of ideas and points are easy to follow. In addition, cohesive is a more technical matter since the writer concentrates on the various linguistic ways of connecting ideas across phrases and sentences (Harmer, 2004, p.245).

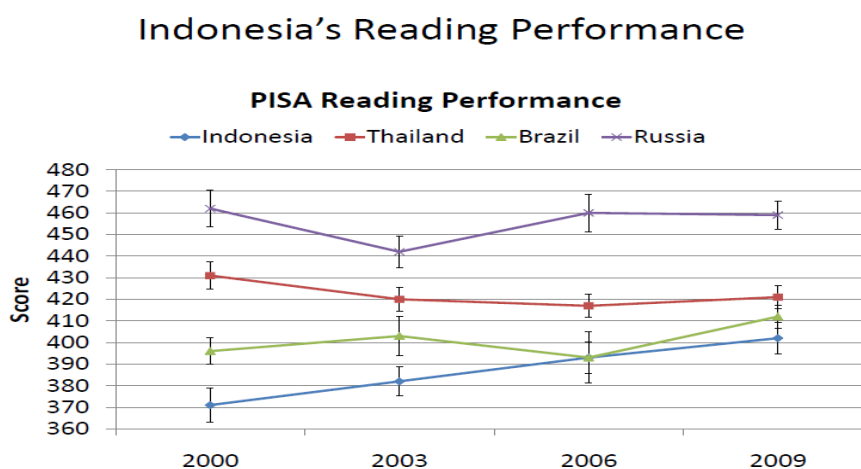
Tierney and Pearson (1984, p. 33) described reading and writing as essentially similar processes of meaning constructing. In the process of reading, meaning is

created as a reader uses the background of his / her experience to do or think and based on the experience he/she generates ideas in order to produce the written form. It means that it has a good relationship between reading and writing. Braunger and Lewis (1997, p. 24) state that writing leads to improve reading achievement, reading leads to better writing performance and combined instruction leads to a higher level of thinking than when either process is taught.

Moreover, Myles (2002) claims that most students in ESL' writing classes hate to this lesson because they have difficulties in getting started, finding the right words, and developing topics when they began to write and express their ideas. Furthermore, Setiawan (2008) shows that writing is the most difficult academic lesson and most students in Indonesia at the university level avoid this activity. The level of their writing is low; their difficulties are not only in arranging the sentences grammatically, but also in choosing the suitable words in their composition. In addition, writing is difficult for the students because they were lack of reading. The more students read, the more input of information or knowledge they gain. The inputs help students to explore new ideas and modify initial notions they have found.

However, the pathetic fact of reading literacy level is that the ranked of Indonesia at level 64<sup>th</sup> out of 65 countries or in the below average level of literacy (PISA, 2012). Based on PISA for 5 periods of assessments of reading literacy, the rank of Indonesia is always below OECD countries' average. (OECD, 2010; OECD, 2012). One of the categories assessed is reading. It is found that the quality of students' reading ability is very low compared to that of other countries. See Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Indonesia’s Reading Performance



Source : Daniel Suryadarma, 2011

Table 2. Indonesia’s Reading Performance

Country	Mean mathematic in PISA 2012	Mean score reading in PISA 2012	Mean score science in PISA 2012
OECD average	494	496	501
Shanghai-China	613	570	580
Singapore	573	542	551
Hong Kong-China	561	545	555
Chinese Taipei	560	523	523
Korea	554	536	538
Macao-China	538	509	521
Japan	536	538	547
Liechtenstein	535	516	525
Switzerland	531	509	515
Netherlands	523	511	522
Estonia	521	516	541
Finland	519	524	545
Canada	518	523	525
Poland	518	518	526
Belgium	515	509	505
Germany	514	508	524

Viet Nam	511	508	528
Austria	506	490	506
Australia	504	512	521
Ireland	501	523	522
Slovenia	501	481	514
Denmark	500	496	498
New Zealand	500	512	516
Czech Republic	499	493	508
France	495	505	499
United Kingdom	494	499	514
Iceland	493	483	478
Latvia	491	489	502
Luxembourg	490	488	491
Norway	489	504	495
Portugal	487	488	489
Italy	485	490	494
Spain	484	488	496
Russian Federation	482	475	486
Slovak Republic	482	463	471
United States	481	498	497
Lithuania	479	477	496
Sweden	478	483	485
Hungary	477	488	494
Croatia	471	485	491
Israel	466	486	470
Greece	453	477	467
Serbia	449	446	445
Turkey	448	475	463
Romania	445	438	439
Cyprus <sup>1, 2</sup>	440	449	438
Bulgaria	439	436	446
United Arab Emirates	434	442	448
Kazakhstan	432	393	425
Thailand	427	441	444
Chile	423	441	445
Malaysia	421	398	420
Mexico	413	424	415
Montenegro	410	422	410
Uruguay	409	411	416
Costa Rica	407	441	429
Albania	394	394	397
Brazil	391	410	405
Argentina	388	396	406
Tunisia	388	404	398

Jordan	386	399	409
Colombia	376	403	399
Qatar	376	388	384
Indonesia	375	396	382
Peru	368	384	373

Source : OECD 2013

From the data above, it shows the Indonesian students' performance in reading is not satisfactory. The score of reading performance of indonesia in 2000 is 371, in 2003 is 361, in 2006 is 393, in 2009 is 402, and the updatest in 2012 is 396, based on the result of the reading performance we can get the average is 385. It means that internationally, the average score of reading achivements indonesian is very low from the average of each periode.

Likewise, the problems also happen in the skill of writing in English. It is proved by the productivity in producing and publishing books in each year. Annual report October 2013 – October 2014 from International Publisher Association (IPA) showed a number of books published in Indonesia were 30.000 in year. It is still low compared with other countries in the world, such as United Kingdom (UK), they were able to publish 184.000 books. Moreover, United States (US) published 304.912 books, China published 444.000 books, and Rusia published 101.981 books. In addition, Taufik Ismail's study showed that writing competence of the Indonesian's student is the lowest in Asia due to lack of reading of the students (cited by Sudaryat, 2010, p. 86).

In the other research of Pammu et al, 2014 entitle Metacognitive Reading Strategies of Less Proficient Tertiary Learners: A Case Study of EFL Learners at a Public University in Makassar, Indonesia. The paper addresses the profiles of metacognitive reading strategies of the less proficient EFL learners in Indonesia based on a case study research conducted at English Department, Hasanuddin University. Data were gathered from forty (40) less proficient learners using

MARSI questionnaire (Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategy Inventory) that has been used in both English as a second and foreign language contexts. The result of the study the medium level of metacognitive awareness as performed by these learners showed consistency with the previous studies that revealed that poor learners paid little attention to meta-analysis of text who tended to stress on local strategy as well as reliance on decoding and linguistic knowledge. The findings have also indicated that while the metacognitive strategy was associated with consistent increases in reported strategy use, it did not bring about corresponding increases in the observed reading performance. It means that the achievement of writing is still low.

Based on the data of some research above, the reading and writing achievement of Indonesian students are still low. And some strategies for achieving the good and excellent score are not found yet. Therefore, the teacher should improve the strategies in teaching reading and writing to the students in every level to motivate them to study and achieve the good and excellent score of reading and writing. The teacher hopefully will improve the students' reading literacy with various techniques, because the teacher as the motivator of the student. So many books or writing sources written not only in Indonesian but also available in English. Therefore to make the students able to read and write English writing resources, the teacher of English must improve the teaching learning quality. To improve it, teachers have to use the strategy or the media that the students usually use. One of the media that students nowadays usually use is a digital or technology. Moreover to improve it, the teacher can use the multimodal strategy to make the students more enthusiastic in reading and writing. In an increasingly technological world, students need to be experienced and skilled not only in reading (consuming) texts employing multiple modalities, but also in *composing* in multiple modalities, if they hope to communicate successfully within the digital communication networks that characterize workplaces, schools, civic life, and span traditional cultural, national, and geopolitical borders (Takayoshi).

Partnership for 21st Century Skills(2007) state that the features of students in 21st Century are:

- a. The finesse of critical thinking (high thinking order)
- b. The finesse of problem solving
- c. The finesse of communication
- d. The finesse of colaboration
- e. The finesse of existence and victorius
- f. The finesse of studying and innovation
- g. The mastery of Media, the updatest technology and communication
- h. The finesse in mastery subject in the school

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Multimodal**

A multimodal approach to the classroom highlights the important use of multiple in real learning environments. Each modality contains information that is a resource for pupil's meaning construction. Each modality covers a different aspect of phenomena which could challenge prior conceptions of the world and provide resources to imagine and think with (Kress, 2001). According to Kress (2001), teachers often use gestures together with speech to draw attention to images and other references within the classroom. In particular, they argue: a variety of modes are interacting and interplaying: gestures, drawings, speech, objects. Each mode contributes to meaning construction: speech to create a difference, an image on the blackboard to get a visual backdrop, manipulation of an object to locate the discussion in the physical setting, action to make clear the dynamic nature of the concept, the image in the textbook to do a stable summary, cohesion in achieved through repetition, synchronization, similarity and contrast. The selection of modes makes meaning: the metaphorical path will be different in each case. Each mode plays a different role in the construction of the entity at hand. Each mode



requires the pupils to do a different type of work in order to understand (Kress, 2001).

In order to Moreno and Mayer (2007) believe that multimodal learning environment use different modes to represent content knowledge. Further, multimodal courses allow instructional events or elements to be presented in more than one sensory mode (multiple representations), thus have been used to further facilitate student's learning (Shah & Freedman, 2003). The development of technology, enhanced courses may result in a more current and relevant curriculum, innovation and new ideas, enhanced course quality, and diversification of academic programs (Maguier, 2005).

Print and screen-based technologies make available different modes and semiotic resources in ways that shape processes of making meaning. The particular material and social affordances (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001) of new technologies and screen, as opposed to page, have led to the reconfiguration of image and writing on screen in ways that are significant for writing and reading. However, some of the configuration and explore the design decisions made about when and how writing and image are used to mediate meaning making. Print-based reading and writing are and always have been multimodal. They require the interpretation and design of visual marks, space, colour, font or style, and increasingly image, and other modes of representation and communication (Kenner, 2004). A multimodal approach enables these semiotic resources to be attended to and moves beyond seeing them as decoration.

Multimodal is a term coined by members of the New London Group, including Cope and Kalantzis (2000), Kress (2003, 2005) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001). These scholars have argued that at this point in history, communication is not limited to one mode (such as text) realized through one medium (such as the page or the book). Rather, as a result of digitization, all modes can now be

realized through a single binary code, and the medium of the screen is becoming the primary site where multiple modes can be composed to make meaning in dynamic ways. Essentially, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) put it, all modes “can be operated by one multi-skilled person, using one interface, one mode of physical manipulation, so that he or she can ask, at every point: ‘Shall I express this with sound or music? Shall I say this visually or verbally?’”. Multimodal texts are characterized by the mixed logics brought together through the combination of modes (such as images, text, color, etc.).

### **Media**

Media is the means for transferring or delivering messages. Li-ling Kuo state that a medium is called the educational medium when the medium transfers message for teaching (Li-ling Kuo, 1996). Furthermore he stated that the use of media is important and it is impossible to coordinate teaching with learning without using media.

Modes and media are independent of and interdependent with each other, meaning that although media and modes are different from each other, the media we use affect the ways in which we can realize meaning through various modes. For instance, the mode of writing is affected differently by the affordances and limitations of the medium of the book versus the medium of the screen (Kress, 2003). Multimedia are resources that make effective use of computer technology by providing simulations, multiple representations, and informative and immediate feedback to learner’s actions at the interface. While interacting with well-constructed multimedia programs, learners can explore the learning environment in their own time, and at their own pace. Multimedia applications for learning purposes accommodate verbal and visual representations with the use of dynamic or static information (Stoney & Oliver, 1999). Learning environments that provide learners with multiple representations offer opportunities for greater interactivity, and complementarily. There are implications about the importance

of interactivity (Healey, 2002), and complementarily (Ainsworth, 1999) in the literature and some of them are analyzed below. Animations and virtual environments can emphasize the key-components of the phenomena under study, highlight the underlying processes explicitly and provide feedback to learners' actions (Scaife & Rogers, 1996).

### **C. THE IMPLICATION OF MUTIMODAL MEDIA**

#### **Web-Blogs**

In doing writing activity through web-blog, the teacher can use power point to introduce the activity first. The illustrating how image and figurative language can work together to convey dramatically different tones and messages. In multimodal texts, it is important to note the conventions surrounding the type of image, the function of the image, and the choice of a particular image (Archer, 2010). Then the teacher can shows a photo in paint and lead students through a series of image/text manipulations and explicit talk about how design decisions influence communicative impact. Images are becoming increasingly important as carriers of meaning in a broad range of academic disciplines such as art, art history, architecture, film studies, cultural studies, media studies, communication science, historical studies, literary studies, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology and education (Van Leeuwen 2005: 11–12). Then, let the students to design and present their own visual poetry, short story and etc, including online publication to a class blog where friends and family can read and respond to thier work.

In doing reding activity, students can read the composition of their friends from their blogs. While teaching and learning are running, they lead to comprehend what the text tells about with the image, sounds in the screen. It will be more interesting for them. In this activity, many things that students can get. Dalton, 2012 state that with connecting this strategies of talking about composing and writers' craft to multimodal composition, its not only writing and reading like the

usual but it teaches the students the metalanguage and teaching vocabularyt they need to discuss composing, production, and distribution work. Vocabulary will draw on film, music, art, and graphics, as well as writing. In using blog, Modes and media are independent of and interdependent with each other, meaning that although media and modes are different from each other, the media we use affect the ways in which we can realize meaning through various modes. For instance, the mode of writing is affected differently by the affordances and limitations of the medium of the book versus the medium of the screen (Kress, 2003).

### **Facebook**

Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. In this 21st century, most of students are interested in facebook, they almost spend their time with their facebook. Seeing the facebook phenomenon which causes the youths spend most their time staying on their laptop or computer to on-line on Facebook, the teachers, as the educators, are demanded to be creative to take the advantages of this social networking site in increasing the students' motivation and their language use ability. Writing is one of language skills that can be improved through this social-networking site. A study conducted by Yunus and Salehi (2012) showed that FB group does help in students' writing, especially in the process of brainstorming before the actual writing. This study also showed that the students can learn new vocabulary when reading the comments of others in the FB group, and the feature of spell-check helps decrease their errors of spelling.

These are the sequence of activities for Learning language Strategies Training (Alias, et al. 2012).

*Stages Discussion Activities Writing Activities Reading Activities*

**Stage 1: Brainstorming**

- 1.1 First reading (highlight potential topics and ideas – mind-mapping)
- 1.2 In writing activity : Topic brainstorming (recognize potential topics)
- 1.3 discussion activity : Feedback training & Introduction to Facebook Features
  - Model good and weak feedback
  - Introduce students to the Facebook features (highlight Facebook Notes layout and Features, post a comment and the use of ‘LIKE’ function)

**Stage 2: Outlining**

- 2.1 Extended reading
  - Find information from reliable sources, e.g Articles labeling
  - Analyze information
    - o Read linear and non-linear texts
    - o Distinguish facts from opinions
    - o Draw conclusions
    - o Make inferences
- 2.2 Seed question (writing activity)
  - Develop a thesis statement
  - Write good topic sentences and supporting details
  - Outlining
- 2.3 Online feedback (discussion activity)
  - Teacher posts three student outlines on his Facebook Notes
  - Students give feedback on the outlines by posting comments

- Teacher uses the 'LIKE' function to highlight good feedbacks

### **Stage 3: Drafting**

#### 3.1 Drafting (writing activity)

- Paraphrasing techniques
- In-text citations techniques

#### 3.2 Close reading

- Cross-reference check
- students check the accuracy of paraphrased information synthesized from the articles and the draft

#### 3.3 Classroom discussion

- Exchange drafts between pairs.
- Students read and give feedback orally in group discussions

### **Stage 4: Revising**

#### 4.1 In reading activity : Revision of drafts (Level 1)

- Peer review \* Students read and give feedback on their peers' drafts in written form in class.
- Teacher's evaluation

#### 4.2 In writing activity : Revision of drafts (Level 2)

- Students make necessary correction for the final draft or the Term Paper

Furthermore, the ideas or opinions by peers help the students in getting a better idea for writing and they can easily complete their essays after getting involved in the FB group discussion. Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012) on their findings concluded, "FB not only gave the students convenience to study at their own place but also enhanced their grammatical knowledge and subsequently

enhanced writing competence after they had discussions with the teacher and FB friends”.

### **e-mails**

E-mail (electronic mail) is the exchanging digital messages between people using digital devices such as computer, tablets and mobile phones. In teaching and learning process. Sometimes, the teacher do not have enough time to finish the material or lesson plan in the class, so for the alternative media, the eacher can se email to continue the teaching and learning process in order to make the student still keep in touch with the teacher everytime and everywhere. Through email, the teacher and student can sent anything, example, image, Ms.words, powerpoint, pdf, and etc. So it make easier for the teaching to save time in the classroom then to be continue in the house or everywhere.

### **E-books & E-journals**

An electronic book is a book publication made available in digital form, consisting of text, images, or both, readable on the flat-panel display of computers or other electronic devices. In teaching language learning, many resources which teacher can accesses to be a media and strategy in improving reading and writing. Some of them are through e-book and e-journal. In reading activity, lead the student to read the articles from journals and e-books. Let students analyze them. Teacher have to guide the learners in analyze what the e-journal and e-book contents. After they can analyze and understand them, lead them to write an article step by step. Till they can produce some article even books. This strategy can use in the university level of students in indonesia.

### **D. CONCLUSION**

In this paper, the suggestion multimodal strategy can be implimented in the language clasroom. And it depends on the level of the students and the environment of them, which one most dominant use by the students. In digital

environment, teacher can use facebook, twitter, blog, e-journals to teach in the language class, but the teacher has to remind the student that without reading, the students can not write something well. Therefore the process is reading the example of the multimodal media and strategy first, then continue to design, compose, write in the blog, facebook, article, and so forth. In the writing or designing process, better for teacher not to ask the student to write first, but let them to start in any step first. Example, some students may choose to start with the narration for each scene and then add the image; others drop in the image first, sequence them, and then audio record their narration, with many a written word to be seen, (Dalton, 2010). So in the process, let the student to design or compose their own writing, because they have different way into their composition. In the end of this paper, hopefully this multimodal strategy can be useful for the language teacher and some advice will be needed.

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