

ASSESSING MULTILITERACY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia curriculum indicates that the nature of literacy in Indonesia has expanded beyond the traditional domains of language instruction (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) to encompass multimodal communication, with a focus on strengthening students' critical viewing and presenting skills. This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by assessing the level of digital literacy skills among senior high school students. Using the analytical framework, this qualitative case study illuminates how students engaged in multiliteracy pedagogy from receptive skills to productive skills. In total, 210 students of second grade participated, of which 100% living in city area. Data include classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with students, and digital work. Results of digital work analyses showed the average level of literacy skills among teenagers in urban area is at low level. However, data also showed that students experienced meaningful practice of multiliteracy and critical thinking. Students experienced four dimensions of multiliteracy pedagogy and improved their critical thinking. Time is the key to reconcile prior experiences and common conceptions of language and language learning with the sophisticated, scientific definition of literacy that leads to the challenge of bringing the many facets and tenets of literacy together into a conceptual whole. Researcher suggests that EFL teachers find ways for learners to become multiliterate communicators with learning experiences of multiliteracy in English classes.

Keywords: Multiliteracy, Multimodal, Digital Literacy, Language Skills

INTRODUCTION

Since today's students are regarded as digital natives, there are numerous opportunities to implement multimodal literacy in Indonesian EFL classrooms. This facilitates the seamless transition from traditional modes to multimodal modes and in-person meetings to online/virtual conferences (Sutrisno, 2024). Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, has implemented the Merdeka curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) to enhance the quality of education (Kemdikbudristek, 2024). It serves as a guide for the teaching of English-language literacy at the elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels. Two additional language learning areas were introduced to the syllabus: viewing and presenting.

The curriculum indicates that the nature of literacy in Indonesia has expanded beyond the traditional domains of language instruction (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) to encompass multimodal communication, with a focus on strengthening students' critical viewing and presenting skills. Literacy has been incorporated into English instruction as a necessary ability for the twenty-first century.

Literacy practices have evolved beyond reading print texts to include seeing multimodal texts, which create meaning through the use of language, visuals, animation, and music in a society dominated by interactive digital media. The challenge lies in effectively articulating receptive skills (Listening, Reading, and Writing) and presenting it in productive skills (Speaking, Viewing, and Presenting). Various print and

digital media formats to cater to various audiences and accomplish various goals.

When students learn from multimodal, the process constructs students' thinking into creativity. During the process, students need to interpret different kinds of meaning through customs and practices is referred to as hybridity. Language learning media is not only printed ones like books and texts. Language learning expands in term of digital learning. In this case, multimodal helps to improve and expand new text forms like websites, PowerPoint presentations, You tube, Podcasts, social media like Tiktok or Instagram, Video Papers, and other visual, auditory, dynamic modalities of communication. The visual becomes an essential part of literacy practices. Language meanings derived from texts such as speech, narratives, and other meaning-making tools are referred to as intertextuality.

Students in particular are continually hooked into a virtual world where multimedia and visual texts predominate because technology is at their fingertips. With screens taking the role of books for many as the primary communication medium, visuals are now more prominent (Jewitt and Kress, 2010). Schools suddenly moved to remote formats during the COVID-19 epidemic (UNESCO, 2020), which required instructors and students to rely more on technology to enhance instruction. Many schools have adopted multiliteracy pedagogy as a result of this in Indonesia.

Multimodal literacy teaches students how to analyze multimodal texts critically and how to use multimodal representations to communicate successfully (Jewitt and Kress, 2010; O'Halloran and Lim, 2011; Van Leeuwen, 2017). Students learn from different modes of multimodal and develop their own way of learning and thinking. At the same time, they also learn how to produce their own multimodal text to convey the ideas that they have after learning. Covid time has forced education and its aspect to receive digital media. As interactive digital media and information technologies become more common place in our lives, the need for multimodal literacy becomes more urgent (Jewitt, 2008; Tan et al, 2016). Multiliteracy

pedagogy has become a must to be integrated in classroom.

A pedagogy of multiliteracies deals with multimodal texts integrated with various modes (linguistic, audio, visual, gestural, and spatial) of language. It also notes the integration between the multiple modes of media and cultural practices in the contemporary world (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). Another definition from The New London Group (2000: 9) coined the word "multiliteracies" to refer to linked features of texts' growing complexity that are connected to a significant change in the impact of new communication technologies. As a result, the following elements are considered: hybridity and intertextuality. Within the definition above, it can be assumed that multiliteracies pedagogy is related to transformed practice as defined the practical phase in which the design is applied in a new context and transformed into a new design.

As the need of multiliteracies pedagogy to be integrated in language learning increases, teachers need to seize the knowledge and be critical as experts. Teachers cannot presume that students, who are growing up in a media-rich environment, will be gullible consumers of media texts and incapable of critically analyzing multimodal representations. Teachers should be able to identify students' initial understanding and skills related to multiliteracy. The concept of multiliteracies has been accepted as an essential element in school curriculum however its application in classroom pedagogy still faces some obstacles. Multimodality is still seen as assisting students' print-based English education rather than promoting their multimodal growth in an Indonesian educational setting, especially when it comes to English instruction (Sukyadi et al., 2016; Drajadi et al., 2018). Students might be given limited use as the teachers may have been known and apply the technology in their classroom, but they do not sure yet about the technology and its pedagogical framework and the impact on it, multimodal literacy.

The national educational system still views this policy as a novel and unproven idea. Therefore, many scholars have yet to pay attention to its application, and specifically its enactment by English teachers in the

classroom. As a result, the methods by which teachers approach and incorporate multimodality into English instruction are often overlooked, especially when it comes to modifying, harmonizing, and incorporating it into the curriculum and objectives of English instruction.

Several studies have demonstrated the use of multimodality in EFL classroom settings. According to Suparmi's (2017) research, writing performance is positively impacted by a language environment that includes embedded components of multimodality. According to a different study by Wulan et al. (2022), students can interact with multiliteracies skills and be exposed to a wider variety of technological options through digital multimodal composition. Sidik (2022) revealed that the integration of multimodality in classroom-level practices of the English teaching and learning process was enacted in accordance with the policy expectation of developing students' multimodal literacy. Sholikhah (2023) has additional study on narrative inquiry as an analysis tool. Thinking and reading skills are improved by combining multimodal material, according to the study. The studies above, however, did not inquire on students' skill in multiliteracy in classroom. There was no additional research on how well students used multiliteracy skills in language learning, despite the fact that multimodality use had an impact on language skills. This approach has not completely addressed the issue of the students' multimodal engagement in the multimodal communication process.

A brief poll the researcher conducted in her school identified senior high school students as individuals who comprehended the notion and facets of multiliteracy. The poll result indicated how students classified themselves regarding the concept of Multiliteracy and its aspects.

I understand the concept of Multiliteracy and the aspects of literacy
57 responses

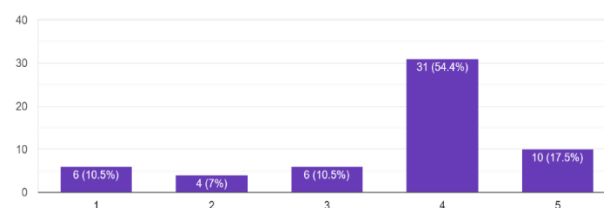


Figure 2.

Nevertheless, a random test of the students' productive abilities in speaking, viewing, and presenting has revealed that the students' performance was below average. Although multiliteracy has emerged as compulsory elements in education, students may encounter challenges when attempting to express their work in language. It is necessary to evaluate how successfully students are learning languages and developing their multiliteracy. As a result of their familiarity with and use of multiliteracy in their education, it is critical to ascertain the extent of their knowledge and readiness for application. This concept entails learning as transformation, whereby the learner changes into a new person and acquires new skills. Therefore, the researcher proposes the research question as follows: what is the level of multiliteracy skills among senior high school students?

METHODS

In order to assess the level of multiliteracy skills that students employ, a digital project was developed to examine students' capability to comprehend the multimodal text and analyze their digital work. The project asked students to explore the topic of digital literacy in different multimodal text and redefine their understanding to their personal experiences, and to document their work in a digital work. Students selected one of the following formats in digital work: visual, audio, and audio visual.

Data Collection included: classroom observations, semi-structured student interviews, and the digital work. Classroom observation is conducted twice a week. Researcher observed and took notes of their activities. She also engaged in informal talks

during the project when the class was over. When she found out outstanding works, she also conducted semi-structured interviews in order to get better understanding of students' comprehension. The use of KWL chart was attached in order to see whether the students can follow the design. The researcher asked questions as follows: What have you known about digital literacy? What do you want to learn more? What have you learnt from the internet? The last data collection was digital work. Digital work showed the level of literacy students had.

The data collection applied adapted Designs for Learning framework by Kalantzis and Cope (2004). The idea is supported by the philosophy that holds that the mind, society, and learning are interrelated domains of educational environments. These phases comprise the combining the subsequent procedures: *situated practice* emphasizes the world of the learner's designed and designed experiences; *overt instruction* helps learners form an explicit metalanguage of design; *critical framing* connects meanings to their social contexts and purposes; and *transformed practice* which involves students transferring and re-creating Designs of meaning from one context to another (New London Group, 2000).

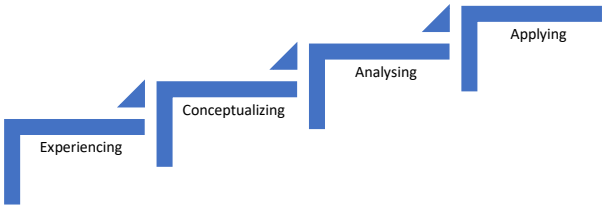


Figure 3. Knowledge Process

The researchers conducted 2 semi-structured sessions: during the project and after digital work completion. Interview questions were developed based on the research questions and focused on how students engaged in multiliteracy pedagogy from receptive skills to productive skills. The interview question was adopted from another research by Dvorghets and Shaturnaya (2015) who investigated media literacy.

Table 1. Semi-Structured Questions

No	Questions	Sessions
1	Individual Information Tell me about your project Why did you choose the project?	Before
2	Perceptions of multimodal What do you know about multimodal? What challenges do you examine? What have you enjoyed about exploring multimodal?	Before and after
3	Reasoning of choosing specific digital work result Why do you choose Audio/Visual/ Audio-visual one? What have you learnt from that specific work?	Before and after
4.	Aspects of Receptive into Productive skills Which receptive skills do you start from? Which productive skills do you start from? What challenges do you find in receptive skills? What challenges do you find in productive skills?	Before and after
5.	Aspects of critical thinking What must you prepare to do the project? What elements are important in your project?	Before and after

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Multiliteracy in Language Learning

To assess students' multiliteracy during language learning, the researcher conducted observation based on the following criteria: the students' understanding of multimodal; accurate identification of the core issue; recognizing depth and significance of the topic; ability to make deep inferences; their

language performance improvement; and demonstrating their high levels of critical judgement.

The first observation from the analysis was that many students were able to identify multimodal text related to topic. They could figure out different sources of multimodal however they still needed time to develop sharp awareness of multimodal strategies used. As a result, students were generally able to cite textual evidence to support their responses to questions based on the source they found. For example, when students were asked about what kind of media was used and what it was about. Generally, they were able to point the topic however they could not respond when they were asked why and how related to the topic.

Kaur and Sidhu (2007) stated that students nowadays need to develop a wide range of skills in order to be deemed multiliterate. These skills will allow them to engage in global learning communities and benefit from the various forms of communication that new technologies have made possible. While achieving multiliteracy is a challenge, developing-nation students face particular challenges. Students need to equip themselves with linguistic and sociocultural knowledge to make connections on the context of the topic and at the same time be able to interpret and produce accurate forms, focus on language use, create meaning and its relationship to language usage.

The next aspect to be observed was students' ability to make deep inferences. This aspect is in lined with critical framing which connects meanings to their social contexts and purposes. This phase required learners reflect on their work from a variety of critical perspectives and consideration, for example, the purpose and function of a piece of knowledge. This ability was identified by the students' choice of making question in relation to what they want to know and what they learnt. Seemingly, students had not been able to demonstrate their ability to formulate questions by using why or how. They seemed to avoid critical questions to make their work easier.

In relation to students' depth and significant understanding of the topic, it was found out that students could not provide logical and detail explanation on what they

have comprehended from the text. In contrast, student's response in explaining what they understood by their own language was richer and more extensive. It was found out that expressing what they understood from the website or multimodal text in native language was easier. This response indicated an awareness and appreciation of the multimodal text used to engage audience related to the specific topic. However, developing the types of explanation to appeal to the audience had become obstacles to provide suitable explanation in English.

In pragmatics, Taguchi (2018) expounded on her research findings, stating that learners invariably synthesize many dimensions of information, such as form, function, context, and consequence of communication, when seeing and analyzing a communicative act. Regarding the example above, the students had not reached the ability to assemble multiple dimensions of information. As a result, they had faced difficulty to formulate questions and made explanation.

Following question was related to how the project improved their language performance. It was found out that students had very limited use of language choice dealing with vocabulary and sentence pattern. The students inclined to use easy pattern and had difficulty to understand the specific vocabulary found in the text. However, students gradually applied the vocabulary found in their sentence and at the same time tried to expand their own knowledge for vocabulary bank.

Relating to this, Maxim (2006) suggested on reading recall and vocabulary gains. More authentic texts were chosen for their accessibility in addition to their value as cultural signifiers as the students needed to engage with culturally rich textual content and that such engagement, in turn, facilitates linguistic development.

Multi Literacy Aspects

The interview was conducted to find out students' personal opinion about the project and at the same time revealed what they had experienced after the project. The first question was related to personal opinion. Interviews conducted affirmed the importance of multimodal, digital literacy, and critical thinking. However, most students were not

aware of digital literacy and how to view the content in digital mode at the beginning.

The second area of interview exploration was related to multimodal mode. Most students were aware of social media use however they had shown little interest on digital information in form of newspaper, or website. They tended to explore information based on social media and was not aware of deep-inference questions.

The next question was related to digital work selection to produce their own multimodal text. It was found out that they tend to choose audiovisual in terms of Instagram content as they could make a good use of technology use.

The first to the third question was more about technology use related to multimodality and multiliteracies. In this era of technology, learning has become unrestricted to certain mode. However, technology literacy related to technical skills and its implications are needed by the students (Benson, 2009). Students need to equip themselves with a set of digital skills and be able to use it at the same time. The idea is to help learners understand the “nature of interactions between people in their interpersonal, virtual, digital and textual spaces” (Beavis and O’Mara, 2010; Castells, 2004). With their own capabilities, students are able to find out information and reshape their own point of view.

The last question that the researcher asked was related to receptive skills. The students found out that reading was easier to understand than listening and writing. Although writing was classified as productive skill at the beginning, it became the receptive skills in new curriculum. This change affirmed the value of self-expression in term of writing and be able to present it into presentation skills. Multiliteracy has helped students to develop and transfer their receptive into productive skills. However, the first area to note was the length of time for students to prepare themselves to move from one skill to another. Some students felt that although multimodal approach was useful, they had to manage all language skills equally.

It was found out that the students needed more repeated process to make themselves familiar and be able to think critically on how to articulate their ideas in systemic way. After the project completion students acknowledged

that they needed more time and space for improvement as they worked and analyze their own work. Another insightful idea was incorporate practice sessions so the researcher could approach and guided some individual who faced difficulty in doing each phase of project. Students admitted that they needed more feedback as they were new to the multimodal media and language exploration for the content. This would help them become accustomed to the instructional content in repeated project with different topic. Due to new national curriculum, it was a challenge for the students to provide more time beyond regular hours for experimentation.

The process of integrating multimodal is part of language learning. As it is also part what students have known as their schemata, the language learning instruction should capitalize on adult learners’ cognitive and extralinguistic capabilities from their first language to scaffold interactions with longer texts (Swaffar et al., 1991). It might develop students’ language learning skills and at the same time learn how use their own critical thinking.

Productive Skills Development

Since this approach recognized that language learning is not only about mastering macro skills but also about using distinct modes of communication to that end, the integration of multimodality into the pedagogical approach has led to a reconceptualization of productive skills. Rather than being viewed as distinct modes, productive skills were seen as an ensemble of multimodal compositions and digital skills that students employed when they employed a combination of modes, including audio, visual, and digital and print media. As a result, the information supporting this category was gathered via student artifacts, which include photographs of their written work as well as audio and video recordings and field notes.

The development of productive skills was one of the main objectives of this study and it was addressed through a wide range of activities, given that “changes in the definitions of literacy have forced educators to re-define writing and writing instruction in a way that incorporates multimodality into the learning instruction. Consequently, output of

project was accomplished through a wide range of multimodal tasks, comprised by guided tasks with material provided by the teacher, along with independent preparation, exploration assignment, deep inferences assignment, multimodal choice, writing process, speaking preparation and presentation. These tasks were addressed with

the aid of multimodal media which help learners to indulge their receptive skills and productive skills. When applying the project in classroom it was found out that students planned to accomplish their writing assignment, digital individual work, then prepare their presentation in speaking.

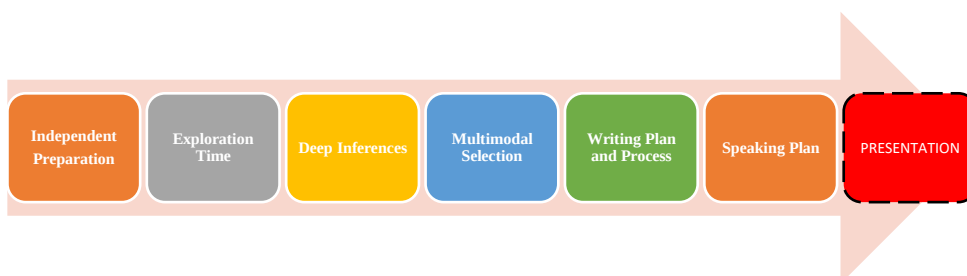


Figure 4. Productive Skill Achievement Process

To begin with, it was important to note that the first task was independent exploration. In this phase, students were given brief explanation about multimodal concept, the learning outcomes target, samples of multimodal media, and Q&A session. During this session, students were not actively involved in the discussion. Some were doing their notes while some others directly moved to exploration phase. Researcher led the students to finally choose what their individual topic would be regarding to digital literacy.

During exploration time, students felt more comfortable to do their individual topics. As they were asked to explore different source of information and multimodal media, they had a tendency to choose similar digital printed information. Some students admitted that printed media was easier than audio- or audio-visual ones to understand. They also employed google translation to make easy translation because it was fast and easy.

Following was deep inferences phase which allowed students to employ critical thinking related to their individual source of information. Researcher helped to format the thinking process by using KWL chart. The overall result of this phase was that few students were able to employ their critical thinking, hence their explanation did not describe that they conveyed critical thinking. Regarding this phase, even fewer students provided relevant replies that accomplished the goal of the task and answered the message, only

10 students out of 27 were able to attain this objective. Moreover, most students described each picture separately in question 9, in addition to this, they expressed lack of vocabulary, thus some of them conveyed meaning using Spanish, an illustration of this can be seen in Figure 3.

Table 2. Students' Deep Inferences Analysis

K (Know)	W (Want) = WH questions relating to new topic to search	L (Learn)
1 topic (184 students)	Apply What	can respond correctly (109 students) cannot respond correctly (75 students)
2 topics (20 students)	Apply What	Can respond correctly (20 students)
3 topics (6 students)	Apply How/Why	Can respond correctly (3 students) Cannot respond correctly (3 students)

It was found out that students cannot respond correctly because they still have difficulty to locate the correct information based on their own question. Students needed to recollect the basic information of how to formulate and apply WH questions before they began deep inferences analysis phase. Porter (2009) addressed critical thinking as regular chances for students to reflect on the process of language learning and self-reflect on their engagement in this frequently challenging process be given to them, in accordance with a multiliteracies approach. This part was often difficult and slowly happens. As they began to formulate a systematic study of employing WH question to acquire potential information, the students have developed the most dynamically developing and promising tools for processing information. Employing the questions of why and how indicated that students gaining knowledge about information and media literacy. This phase also employed digital literacy in terms of information search, processing, storing and retrieving, training in information perception and comprehension, critical thinking development, ability to understand the hidden meaning of multimodal media.

Multimodal Selection

When students were asked to select their product. Most of them produced a combination of modes, including audio, visual, and digital print media. They preferred to upload their product in social media to present their work in front of the classroom.

Further interview conducted revealed that students realized that productive skills were not only contemplated as separate modes, but also as an ensemble delivered by means of multimodal compositions and digital skills that students acquired. Another thinking admitted by students was language learning not only related to language skills but also distinct modes of communication. Consequently, students needed to develop their vocabulary because foreign language learners needed to be able to produce language, their vocabulary needs to reach productive knowledge (González-Fernández and Schmitt, 2017). As a result of the aforementioned, the following four subcategories emerged.

Most students admitted as this has been their first project in English, they had faced difficulties that had been elaborated above. The discussion among students and guidance from researcher had helped them to understand the concept better. They felt amazed when they realized that technology use could help them to produce a good product. For example, student might use Canva/Padlet to select their product design and template. Some students who had difficulty in speaking might ask Google Text to Translate in order to practice the correct pronunciation and intonation. This process helped students to acquire their receptive skills and productive skills.

It was assumed that this approach used for the creation of these multimodal compositions was process oriented. The primary focus was not exclusively on the final product, but rather on the several steps and strategies that students employed throughout the creative process to construct meaning and convey their intended messages. Students might face a lot of difficulty related to technical issue as well as language elements itself. Allen and Paesani (2010) argued that instructors may leave open the option for students to write or speak using their L1 during opportunities for reflection and self-reflection, one of the seven principles of literacy outlined by Kern (2015).

Another finding was as students worked with various visual materials for the discussion with the partners, they also explored those tools to present their own ideas in attractive and engaging way. Shin (2023) stated that “multimodal approaches to composition also investigate how different modes are incorporated and synthesized to create meaning.” With respect to the latter, in this way, the different mediums used by students to compose included videos, images, drawings, performances, and comic strips; thus, the mediums were both digital and non-digital. Therefore, creative ways helped students as language learners to become fully functional communicators with multiliteracy skills, including cultural literacy, in any challenging situation.

The last finding was project product indicated how students were able to combine audio, visual, pictures, art, and kinesthetic into another multimodal product that they

individually produced. As they tried to communicate what they had in mind after they had listened, read or written the concept, students were aware that combination and manipulation of the aspects above might help to convey their ideas more effectively. This finding is in line with Keun and Chingyi (2022) who stated that this experience helped students to develop their social and cultural literacy as well. Students learnt how to analyze and interpret through their presentation content. It may be said that the use of a variety of resources helped students learn language as well as other abilities like social and cultural awareness.

CONCLUSION

Multiliteracy is important to scaffold language learning as the text broadly comes in terms of written, spoken, visual, and audiovisual documents. As students are able to interact with the target language meaningfully and purposefully through different modes of communication, such as text, images, audio, performances, and video, as well as through common practices for them that included content creation and storytelling. During the process of learning, multimodality was used for both language instruction and language learning, participants encountered language input and output in a contextualized way. It provided opportunities for students to successfully use the language in the expansion of the story, which led to significant improvements in their productive language skills. In order to provide students with the necessary understanding on multimodal literacy, this study suggests the government to

establish a professional development program that focuses on this topic.

Conceptualizations of literacy must be refined and deepened, and practitioners must identify and implement literacy practices, not just textual content. Additionally, incorporating these components suggests a certain amount of scaffolding from teachers, which is an additional topic for future study. Finding the right balance between understandable input and linguistic output for pupils' English language development would be beneficial. More precisely, the development of productive abilities, since teachers can model language usage for learners' output and supply them with sufficient knowledge to enable them to become competent and self-assured target language users through input.

Time is the key to reconcile prior experiences and common conceptions of language and language learning with the sophisticated, scientific definition of literacy that leads to the challenge of bringing the many facets and tenets of literacy together into a conceptual whole.

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