



Exploring Digital Multimodal Composing in English Writing: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract

The most recent technologies have assisted educators in simplifying the process of teaching and learning; for example, they have expanded the writing course into an activity that is no longer restricted to the combination of words, phrases, and sentences to express the meaning in place of collaborating audio, video, and web-based elements in teaching-learning, which are all considered to be examples of digital technology. In particular, this conceptual paper focuses on the nature of multimodal digital composition, how digital multimodal is utilized in the teaching and learning processes of writing as well as the challenge and its solutions. Initially, a definition of what precisely digital composing is will be provided. The researcher conducts an in-depth investigation of recent studies on multimodal digital composition (MDC) and the function of multimodal digital composition (MDC) in improving comprehension and enhancing acquisition. Furthermore, pedagogical implementations are explored, in which the researcher outlines a multimodal digital composition (MDC) process that language teachers might utilize as a guide for the teaching-learning process of writing. A discussion of pedagogical implications follows this section. In conclusion, the obstacles and potential remedies leading to a deeper understanding are examined.

Keywords: *Multimodal Digital Composition; Technologies; Writing; ELT*

Introduction

This article focuses on the role of multimodal digital composition (MDC) in ELT. Recent articles on interaction within ELT inspire the paper. The authors mentioned that MDC is a promising area of research that has recently attracted the attention of some ELT researchers (e.g., Hafner, 2015; Jiang & Luk, 2016). For example, Ilias Karasavvidis (2019) examines adolescent students' use of multimodal resources through multimodal dimensions of composing video and radio documentaries for purposes of critical positioning. Critically, MDC has been noted to enhance foreign learners' comprehension, it is also reported by Hafnar (2015) the combination of DMC by teachers in ELT classrooms can offer various means to present and negotiate identities for students, leading to more invested efforts in L2 learning (e.g., Hafner, 2015; Jiang, 2017).

Students' ability to demonstrate their knowledge to their instructors, classmates, and the world at large is no longer restricted to the written word; through the development of modern technological tools

in the classroom, students can participate in the design process by making "configurations that distribute meanings across the boundaries of modes and modal connections" (Jewitt, 2008,) instead of merely writing a paper. Students and teachers often equate computer- and technology-related multimodal resources (e.g., video, animation, podcast) with frivolity and a diversion from serious schoolwork (Wan, 2012). In addition, computer use is frequently linked to destructive behaviours like addiction, overindulgence, and aggression (Wan, 2012). Teachers must follow a predetermined curriculum from the top down, limiting their autonomy over student instruction, course material, and assessment methods.

Theoretically, this article is based on three primary concepts: the nature of multimodal digital composition (MDC), the implementation of media in ELT writing classrooms as well as its implications after being implemented, and the challenges that students might face during the implementation, as well as the solutions as a whole comprehension. In the following section, particular emphasis will be placed on these theoretical constructions.

The Nature of Multimodal Composition

In the context of digital compositions or projects, the term "digital multimodal" refers to the utilization of various forms of communication, including but not limited to text, graphics, audio, and video. It requires incorporating a variety of semiotic resources to effectively communicate meaning and interact with audiences (Smith et al., 2020; Barnes & Tour, 2023; Lee, 2022). Digital multimodal practices have garnered more attention in educational contexts, notably in literacy and language development (Ohler, 2013; Smith et al., 2020; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016; Barnes & Tour, 2023; Lee, 2022).

One of the most essential things about multimodal writing is that it focuses on using different ways to say the same thing. This makes it possible to show thoughts and information more nuanced and entirely. For example, a multimodal work might use text, pictures, and sound to tell a story or send a message. The writer can use more than one mode to make the piece more powerful and effective. Another important part of multimodal writing is looking at what each method can do. Each mode of communication has its strengths and weaknesses, and it is essential for successful communication to know what these are. For example, pictures can show information and make people feel something, while sounds can build an atmosphere and improve the whole thing.

Composing in several modes using digital tools can be valuable for expressing thoughts and communicating information using digital formats. According to Line Yarosh et al. (2022), digital multimodal composing (DMC) allows students to express their ideas and identities imaginatively by generating a digital artifact. It integrates various elements, including textual text, photos, video, and sounds, to produce novel combinations of artistic expressions. Composing in digital multimodal formats also affects students and incorporates collaborative and distributed procedures in its workflow. Students collaborate on several multimodal projects, brainstorming, creating, editing, and presenting final outputs (Smith, 2018). According to Smith (2018), the multidimensional structure of multimodal projects makes it possible to delegate duties and conduct research into various modes of transportation and funding sources.

According to Ranker (2014), individuals who study the properties of media and communications, as well as their simultaneous use of a variety of modes of expression, such as textual, aural, gestural, and visual, almost universally use the term multimodal to describe their investigations. It is then integrated with digital tools as a learning medium by Hafner (2015), who claimed that DMC is "activities that engage learners in the use of digital tools to construct texts in multiple semiotic modes, including writing, image, and sound."

Combining online literacy with multimedia composition can generate fascinating teaching-learning in classrooms, and students will also obtain a more profound knowledge of the themes through

the effects of these technologies. In the current digital age, digital literacy is highly crucial in developing pedagogy. Digital multimodality has improved students' technological and linguistic skills (Ohler, 2013). Emergent bilingual students can capitalize on their academic and linguistic talents, express themselves, challenge language beliefs, and develop communication skills through digital multimodal composition (Smith et al., 2020). Students' understanding of semiotic systems can be improved using multimodal pedagogies combining digital tools and modes (Lee, 2022).

Students of today are accustomed to participating in digital media daily, whether they are reading and watching information, authoring, and sharing content, or any combination of these activities. On the other hand, there is still a significant pedagogical digital divide between the digital practices of these students and the methods of communication taught in classrooms (Hundley & Holbrook, 2013). Digital media production can take the shape of anything, including YouTube, TikTok, PowerPoint, and Instagram. Nevertheless, most students prefer YouTube because it is an easy platform to use. Teachers must recognize the underlying cognitive distinctions between writing for the page and digital media. Only a little research has been done to assist us in understanding how authors and students manage multimodal and digital composition (DePalma & Alexander, 2015). However, teachers need to be aware of these differences.

The Implementation of Digital Multimodal Composing in Writing

Composing learning material through digital multimodal can be done through various modes such as text, images, sound, social media, web blogs, and video; the following techniques can apply the implementation:

Text

Text is important in digital multimodal writing because it communicates ideas, thoughts, and arguments clearly and precisely. Help students see how multimodal writing is relevant and useful in the real world and show them how text can be mixed with other modes to make meaning clearer and messages more effective. The teacher can start by showing students how to make compositions using multiple media types and providing step-by-step guidance and help in choosing the right modes, organizing ideas, putting the text together well, and encouraging students to plan and rewrite their essays to make sure they make sense and are clear.

Images

Teaching with pictures helps students learn how to read and understand pictures, so they can examine and understand what they see. Images can show complicated ideas, feelings, and information clearly and powerfully. By adding pictures to their digital multimodal compositions, students can improve their communication ability by using visual elements to support and strengthen what they have written.

Smith (2016) looks at how urban 12th-grade students react to and analyze literature by working together to make multimodal projects with images and other modes. It shows how dynamic and different multimodal composition processes are. Also, Morrison-Young and Bres (2023) talk about how critical multimodal analysis can determine what something looks like and how multimodal combinations can be used to make truth claims about the world. Overall, the role of images in multimodal compositions is important and serves different goals in different situations.

Sound

Sound is very important for making interesting and effective pieces in digital multimodal composing. Kim and Li (2020) talk about how important sound is in multimodal communication and how it can be used to make texts that connect better. It talks about how sound, words, pictures, and other

things, can help people make sense of things. Xujie (2023) says that one of the semiotic modes in digital multimodal composition is the use of sound. It shows how words and pictures can be combined with sound to make multimodal texts like digital stories, videos, and posters. Barnes and Tour (2023) talk about how sound is used in multimodal discourse analysis and how video language can be used to study how people talk. It shows how important sound is for understanding how a topic is communicated.

Video

Video is an important part of digital multimodal writing because it lets students assemble texts using different linguistic modes, like writing, images, and sounds (Hafner, 2015). Digital multimodal communication has been used in the classroom with video projects like digital stories (Hafner, 2015). Learners can better prepare for their future in a digitally connected world with the help of video compositions (Hafner, 2015). Research has shown that multimodal writing is a complicated process affected by many things (Smith, 2016). Students often have modal preferences when working with open and flexible digital tools. They spend most of their time working with one mode and depend on it to carry the communicative weight of their writing (Smith, 2016). This shows that video, as a way to communicate, can be a big part of how students put together their multimedia compositions.

In English Language Arts classes, teens' ideas about the goals and forms of multimodal writing have been examined (Smith, 2018). Students see digital projects as a way to reach a larger audience socially, entertain them, and show what they can do as composers (Smith, 2018). They focus on making songs that work well together. This can be done by closely matching modes or building meaning at a thematic level. This creates a multisensory experience that shows the story's world (Smith, 2018). This shows how video compositions can make people feel something and connect with them emotionally. Cimasko & Shin (2017) examined how video compositions are used in second language (L2) writing classes. Research has shown that L2 learners fix their written essays by turning them into multimodal digital videos. This shows the potential of video as a form of expression in L2 multimodal writing settings (Cimasko & Shin, 2017).

Salmerón et al. (2020) looked into using Internet videos, such as those in which authors talk about their views on a subject, to learn about complicated issues. (Salmerón et al., 2020) Elementary school students learned about the pros and cons of drinking water by evaluating and combining different kinds of web pages, such as videos; how the information was presented greatly affected what students thought about the topic (Salmerón et al., 2020). Students defended the views in the videos more than those in the texts. This shows that video compositions can persuade viewers and change their thoughts about a subject. In summary, video plays a significant part in digital multimodal composing. It lets learners interact with various semiotic modes, allowing them to feel, be entertained, and express themselves. Video compositions can be used in various educational settings, such as English Language Arts and second language (L2) writing classes. They can change how people think about and understand complicated topics.

Web-Blog

Web blogs, commonly known as blogs, can help improve writing abilities and promote language learning. It can contribute to critical thinking, information literacy, and reading skills (Fellner & Apple, 2006; Kitchakarn, 2014). It also promotes collaboration among students, which can impact their language development. It has been used in professional contexts to enhance workplace-like business writing skills. Platforms like LinkedIn and blogging can create authentic roles, real purposes, and actual readerships for student writing, simulating real-world business communication (Sharma, 2022).

The use of web blogs can be combined with power point to run writing activities; the teacher could lead the instruction in the form of images, text, and videos towards power point on what students should do in their web blog writing. Then, the students create their literature works, such as poetry, short

story, and rhyme, on a web blog so each student can read other students' writing because it is published online. Here, the students could stimulate their critical thinking when they analyze the images or videos shown on PowerPoint and stimulate their creativity when they convey them in literature works.

Social Media

Social media can be viewed as a mode of digital multimodal composition. It is a tool for making, sharing, and interacting with multimodal texts that use different communication methods, like text, images, videos, and audio. Users of social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can make and share multimodal material with a large audience. Using social media in digital multimedia writing has several advantages. It allows multimodal texts to be shared in online affinity spaces, where readers and writers can talk about the material and interact with each other (Hafner, 2013).

Social media platforms are often made with text-based, visual, and audio modes (Broder et al., 2019). This means that users need to learn how to understand multimodal information. O'Halloran et al. (2015) said that social media makes it easier for people to collaborate and participate because users can comment, like, and share multimodal texts. This creates a sense of community and involvement. In education, social media can be used as a tool in digital multimodal composition to help students learn more. It allows students to make multimodal compositions and share them with their peers and a larger audience, encouraging real and meaningful communication. O'Halloran et al. (2015) also said that social media platforms can also be a place for collaborative learning, where students can talk, give feedback, and build knowledge together. Dahlström, H. (2022). said that social media can also be used to share and find information, allowing students to access and analyze multimodal texts from different sources.

Overall, social media as a mode of digital multimodal composition gives a dynamic and interactive platform for creating, sharing, and engaging with multimodal texts. It allows for collaboration, participation, and real communication, which improves the learning process and helps people learn how to use technology. However, teachers must show students how to use social media responsibly and critically, ensuring they understand privacy, credibility, and digital citizenship problems.

The Challenges and Solutions

Language teaching and learning knowledge can be effectively conveyed using digital multimodal, an effective technique. However, the researcher notes that specific difficulties are still associated with using digital multimodal composition in the classroom. The challenges and solutions in using digital multimodal composing can be summarized as follows:

1. Technical Challenges

One of the difficulties of digital multimodal writing is the technical side, like making sure digital tools and platforms are available and easy to use. Some students might not have the right tools or apps, making the learning environment less fair. Also, compatibility issues, file formats, and bugs in software can make it hard for multimodal creations to work well. Teachers can help students deal with these issues by giving them access to digital tools and technologies in the classroom or by looking into other options, such as open-source software or web-based platforms that can be used on different devices. It is important to ensure everyone has the same access to tools and that kids can get technical help when needed.

2. Pedagogical Challenges

Another challenge is ensuring multimodal writing is part of the curriculum and training methods. Teachers might struggle to develop good learning activities that encourage useful multimodal writing and fit with learning goals. They might also find it hard to judge and give feedback on multimedia works. These problems can be fixed by helping teachers learn more about multimodal writing pedagogy and

teaching techniques through professional development and training. Teachers can share the best ideas and tools by working together. Also, clear rules and rubrics can be made to help grade multimodal writings and give students useful feedback.

3. Language and Cultural Problems

It can be hard for students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to describe themselves well in multimodal compositions. They need help figuring out how to handle different modes' cultural and linguistic norms and how to change their speech for different audiences. Educators can help students overcome language and cultural obstacles by giving them scaffolding and direct lessons in multimodal communication skills. This includes teaching students how to use different modes to express meaning, change their language and visuals for different groups, and deal with cultural norms and expectations in multimodal compositions.

4. Different Students Have Different Levels of Access to Modern Technology

When using digital multimedia, this case is often the most important thing. When there are students who are used to technology and students who are not, it is hard for a teacher to help everyone, according to Ware (2008). "Literacy-rich, out-of-school digital worlds" are not open to all kids. So, they cannot be in them. The problem of students not having fair access to digital multimodal tools can be fixed by teachers taking on the role of facilitators and giving students different levels of help based on the type of school they attend.

In conclusion, digital multimodal writing comes with technical, pedagogical, multimodal literacy, language, and cultural difficulties. By giving students access to digital tools, offering professional development for teachers, teaching multimodal literacy skills, and helping students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, teachers can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for digital multimodal composing.

Conclusion

Technology helps people ease their activities, not to mention the teacher; it helps to maximize their teaching in a learning process. Critically, MDC has been noted to enhance foreign learners' writing comprehension. It is also reported that the combination of DMC by teachers in ELT classrooms can offer various means to present and negotiate identities for students, leading to more invested efforts in L2 learning. Students and teachers often equate computer- and technology-related multimodal resources (e.g., video, animation, podcast) with frivolity and a diversion from serious schoolwork. Theoretically, this article is based on three primary concepts: the nature of multimodal digital composition (MDC), the implementation of media in ELT writing classrooms as well as its implications after being implemented, and the challenges that students might face during the implementation, as well as the solutions as a whole comprehension.

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