



An Investigation of the Application of Multimodal Teaching in Chinese Middle School EFL Reading Classes

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Abstract. In the 1990s, western scholars have applied multimodal theory to the teaching and learning processes. Although numerous studies on the implementation of multimodal English teaching models in China have been conducted, the most of them have concentrated on high schools or universities, and the study on reading instruction is perplexing. However, there are some difficulties in Chinese junior high school reading classes at the moment. The monotonous classroom environment and teaching style have resulted in a lack of interest in reading, poor reading comprehension, and bad reading performance. This paper aims to address: (1) the current state of multimodal English reading instruction in China junior high schools, and (2) to discuss implementation techniques and instructional methods in the China junior high EFL reading classrooms. Using *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a model, we investigate multimodal teaching options for junior high English reading and look at the benefits of applying multimodal theory to teaching English reading in junior high school. It turns out that teaching with multimodal theory works well. The paper also gives an insight of how EFL teachers in China can engage students' multisensory collaboration, stimulate their interest in learning, and ultimately improve learning outcomes through the use of multimodal materials.

Keywords: Multimodality · Junior English · English Reading Teaching

1 Introduction

Due to rapid breakthroughs in information technology and cross-cultural contact, multimodal modes of expression have invaded all facets of our daily life. With the emergence of CD-ROMs, books increasingly include elements other than gorgeous typographic images to enhance the reading experience. In TV advertising and news programs, a variety of symbolic resources such as images, text, and sound are employed to convey information. Visual, aural, visual, musical, and other types of multimodal communication are unquestionably altering how people receive new information. The way we perceive new things is shifting. The multimodal nature of contemporary conversation renders the standard reading teaching approach obsolete in this study [1, 2]. Among the

lesser-known facts about Chinese junior high school students are the following: they must learn not only language and writing, but also other information expressions, how to understand various information symbols, and how to communicate and exchange information with others [2].

Reading instruction has grown fractured as a result of the Internet. Students' thinking is fragmented, in addition to reading fragmented texts. Students sometimes struggle to read, complete, or penetrate lengthier and more challenging English literature. Extending your English reading repertoire is an excellent strategy to boost your reading literacy. Teachers can utilize a variety of multimodal materials to guide students through the text, assisting them in gaining a better understanding of the material and increasing their interest in reading. Visual, aural, and sensory resources all serve as examples of multimodal discourse in whole-book reading teaching. These include visual ideograms such as maps and illustrations, text typefaces, chapter headings, and even the speaker's clothing, gestures, attitudes, and posture, as well as aural ideograms such as music, films, and audio. By accessing, integrating, presenting, and utilising multimodal symbolic resources, teachers can assist students in integrating tales, activating their thinking, and gaining a broader cultural understanding of stories. Additionally, students' reading assessments can be multimodal, boosting their multimodal communication competence and foreign language acquisition.

The ability to read is a critical component of English instruction. Reading is the cornerstone of information acquisition and language skill development [3]. The following examples pertain to EFL reading classrooms in Chinese senior high schools. The target groups, who vary in age from 13 to 15, presume a fundamental understanding of English. While children are still in middle school, they are still learning and mastering the language. Between the ages of 12 and 14, adolescence is a period of physical and psychological growth. They desire to learn from books, explore new things, differentiate themselves, and cultivate their own hobbies and personality traits. To improve teaching outcomes, teachers should diversify their instructional resources, employ a variety of instructional approaches, and increase their students' enthusiasm for learning [4].

Multimodality may be an extremely effective technique for developing new classroom teaching approaches when it comes to teaching English reading. According to the literature study, multimodal education has been studied in other nations for many years and is now rather mature, being applied to a variety of courses, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, the majority of research on multimodal instruction is theoretical in nature, with scant attention paid to instructional techniques. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the majority of research on multimodal discourse analysis in education has been conducted in science or university settings. Additionally, there are few research examining multimodal discourse analysis in junior high English courses [3]. Multimodality in the middle school classroom Chinese English classes have historically emphasized listening, writing, and speaking. While the research comparing the multimodal approach in Chinese reading EFL classes is mature and systematic, the scope of the research is limited. The purpose of this research is to examine the present application of multiliteracies teaching in Chinese middle school reading classes. 1) The current situation of English reading instruction in junior high schools; and 2) Specific ideas for implementing multimodal English reading instruction in junior high schools.

Western scholars began to incorporate nonverbal symbols into the cognitive framework of learning in 1996, with the advent of multimodal discourse analysis by Kress and van Leeuwen. Multimodal discourse includes language, pictures, video, and movement. The multimodal teaching model is derived on multimodal discourse analysis theory [5]. This teaching style engages students' senses, vision, and hearing by incorporating a variety of modalities such as video, audio, graphics, and body language. It offered a multimodal pedagogy comprised of four stages of instruction [6]. Beauchamp and Kennewell suggest that multimodal instruction fosters teacher-student and student-student interaction, resulting in increased language use and student expressiveness [7]. Stein views multimodal resources such as text, language, and visuals as a means of engaging students' numerous senses [8]. Kress and Van Leeuwen advocate multimodal teaching and learning by integrating images, films, and other media into classroom instruction [9]. Foreign researchers feel that multimodal teaching and learning approaches can significantly improve education and have begun using them in classrooms worldwide [10]. In 1996, they proposed the multimodal literacy approach. The New London Group suggested the multimodal method to language learning for the first time in 1996 [11]. Language teachers should place a premium on their pupils' multiliteracy development. Numerous Western countries have recently expressed an interest in multiliteracy. This was the first time in language teaching when multimodality was used. Since then, numerous other studies on multimodality in language education have been published [12]. Increased study on multimodal teaching in other nations, including the use of media technologies and multimodal discourse analysis. The growth of media technologies and multimedia discourse analysis has improved Chinese research on foreign language instruction [13]. Recent improvements in research on multimodal foreign language education have been made using systemic functional linguistics' social semiotics. Social semiotics is extensively employed in multimodal foreign language instruction research in systemic functional linguistics [2]. Zeng Qingmin believes that multimodal teaching should emphasize multimodal literacy by allowing students to use the Internet, visuals, role-playing, and other methods to build their cooperative learning skills [14]. Multimodal teaching is the process of instructing pupils through a variety of media, including vocabulary, visuals, sounds, and gestures. To maximize the effectiveness of their instruction, teachers must employ multimodal materials and multimedia technologies [15]. These research set the framework for the implementation of multimodal instruction in China. In other nations, a variety of subjects, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, have been examined and integrated into multimodal instruction. However, the majority of research on multimodal education is theoretical in nature, with scant attention paid to classroom practice. There has been a dearth of research on multimodal teaching strategies in foreign language education. Recent research has emphasized the emotional and cognitive benefits of multimodal instruction. As a result, experimenting with multimodal teaching methods in middle school English classes is crucial for students' English skill and attitude toward learning to improve [5].

2 Main Body

2.1 The Current State of Junior High English Reading

The majority of junior high students are dissatisfied with their current reading ability in English but are eager to improve. Students face numerous reading difficulties. For instance, there is no way to accurately guess the meaning of a word in context for raw words. Sentences that are lengthy and difficult to comprehend, as well as their referents, are difficult to comprehend in sentence comprehension. There is no way to rapidly locate information that requires detailed comprehension. They struggle to summarize the central idea and are prone to misinterpret the author's views and attitudes. The chapter structure, like the author's logic, is perplexing. They do not select reading strategies according to the purpose of the reading or the difficulty of the text. They are unable to connect prior knowledge to the text's content. It's challenging to read a chart and process the data in order to meet the topic's requirements. Despite this, they lack methods and experience in determining the meaning of words, the ability to summarize the main idea, comprehend details, and organize a text, inadequate grammar knowledge, an insufficient amount of extracurricular reading and daily accumulation, and a lack of mastery of diagrams and reading strategies. These constraints impair their ability to improve their reading skills in English [16].

The English reading classroom is excessively regimented. Recently, multimodal instruction has become a research hotspot. This method is used to teach English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, the majority of junior high English teachers continue to think in traditional ways and do not view students as primary classroom subjects. They comprehend individual words while reading but are unable to translate sentences or passages coherently, making it difficult to clarify the text's connotation and the author's emotional performance, impeding the efficiency of reading instruction and the development of junior high students' comprehensive quality. Reading is a comprehensive module in junior high English education with the goal of enhancing students' English foundation, critical thinking abilities, and cultural literacy. This teaching style not only makes learning more difficult for students, but also depletes the classroom's energy. Overemphasizing the language's meaning and multiple applications diverts students' attention away from developing practical English skills and dilutes the overall effect of reading instruction [17]. In reading texts, teachers are unable to pay close attention to the authors' cultural descriptions and emotional expressions. In practice, teachers frequently misuse multimodal resources in English reading instruction, focusing exclusively on explaining grammatical and syntactic knowledge contained in the text, thereby reducing the discourse to a dull classroom environment [3]. As a result of the misuse of modal resources in teaching, the effect of reading class is diminished and students' English reading level remains unchanged [18].

There is an inability to motivate oneself to read in English. The majority of junior high students lack the habit of English reading and are unmotivated in English reading classes. When confronted with reading obstacles in English, the majority of students become frustrated, developing a negative attitude that further diminishes their interest in reading and makes improving their reading performance difficult [16]. Prior to multimodal instruction, students lacked motivation to read. They read to meet their parents'

and teachers' expectations or to improve their reading scores, not to enjoy reading. Teachers are dominant in English reading instruction, and students are merely participants. Students demonstrate less classroom initiative and motivation, they acquire knowledge passively through the teacher's fill-in-the-blank explanations and indoctrination, and it is difficult for students to truly participate actively in the classroom when the teacher's translation-based teaching style is used. As a result of students' disinterest in classroom instruction in English reading, their low reading achievement and reading ability, and other unavoidable issues [20]. Junior high school students lack motivation and interest in reading English, which has an adverse effect on the learning effect of reading [19].

English reading instruction for other special student groups needs to be improved. Yunnan Province, for example, is located in the west and is predominantly mountainous, with 25 ethnic minorities accounting for 1/3 of the total population. These areas lack educators, professionals with technical and professional skills, and educational development. Teaching English reading in junior high schools is still based on the traditional teaching model: teacher-centered, language as the primary content, boring classroom environment, lack of teachers' creation of realistic contexts, inappropriate use of new media to assist teaching, and inability to form a positive multimodal interaction, all of which frequently result in students' low motivation to learn English, academic underachievement, and lack of social skills. This results in a lack of motivation to learn English, a mismatch between Chinese and Western cultures, and a lack of classroom interaction. Students with weak English foundations, low motivation to learn, negative attitudes toward learning, insufficient capacity to receive knowledge, and a low level of forming and developing abilities in English subject learning are more likely to be the children of migrant workers. Reading is clearly defined by students' reading abilities and low numbers. It is critical to investigate the effects of multimodal teaching on the reading ability of junior high students in order to improve their English reading ability [16].

2.2 Strategies for Implementing Multimodal English Reading Instruction in the Junior High

Teachers can use a variety of multimodal resources to guide students through the masterpiece and aid in their comprehension. Discourses of multimodal reading instruction that is primarily text-based but incorporates visual, auditory, sensory, and other resources for all senses. Ideograms include audio, video, songs, and the speaker's rhythm, intonation, and accent. By integrating, presenting, and utilizing multimodal symbolic resources, teachers can aid students in comprehending the story. Additionally, students' reading assessments can be multimodal, enhancing their multimodal communication skills and foreign language learning. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is used to demonstrate how multimodal instruction can be used to teach complete book reading.

Illustrating and diagramming the story. One of the difficulties with whole-book reading is that students often lack background knowledge and vocabulary, making reading difficult and discouraging. Teachers can use illustrations to assist students in comprehending key vocabulary and the context of the story. This is especially true for stories set in small towns in the 1930s South, where the names of local families are frequently obscure to non-native speakers. Without prior knowledge of the Depression and racial



Fig. 1. Identity Chart of Lisa

discrimination in the South, some of the characters' actions are difficult to comprehend. The teacher hopes to paint a picture of small-town life and the characters' situations through the use of a dozen images depicting rural life during the Great Depression and what it was like for blacks in a segregated society. The rich dialogue and plot of the story introduce the reader to the story's central characters. As Fig. 1 illustrated, teachers can use an identity chart to assist students in learning about the personalities, ideas, and experiences of the characters. This assists students in visualizing the characters, comprehending their motivations, and making predictions about the story's direction.

Utilizing video to assist students in comprehending cultural connotations. Teachers can assist students in grasping the story's central themes by utilizing a variety of culturally and historically relevant video resources. To emphasize this point, the novel's opening scene depicts townspeople breaking into the prison and lynching black man Tom Robinson. Students view a video on lynching that explains the crime and its roots in the American South's history of black people. How is lynching defined legally? How did gangs come to be? Who was to blame for lynching's popularity? Without the supplemental video information, the students' understanding of the scene may have been limited to the plot, but the cultural information enables them to decode the story's depth. This is the point at which the teacher introduces the Scottsboro trials (the prototype is shown in the mini-documentary) and invites students to consider who should be held accountable for the Scottsboro trials' failure. Who was responsible for the Scottsboro conviction? Who was to blame for Tom Robinson's injustice in the original story? Students learn through the documentary that historical reality can be just as shocking as fiction, provoking more in-depth discussions about racial discrimination and human rights.

Along with visual aids, students must be guided to concentrate on expressing and constructing meaning during the reading process by reading aloud. Teachers select key passages from the story to read aloud in character or allow students to choose their favorites. Reading aloud can be done live or as part of an audio book. The combination of visual and auditory modalities can aid students in grasping language meaning, while the rhyme and rhythm of the sounds can impart an aesthetic sense. Students can then create actions, gestures, and backgrounds for character dialogue and perform the

story, enhancing reading and comprehension. When teachers teach, for example, teachers should not overlook movement modal resources. For instance, when instructing students and presenting them with discussion questions, teachers must employ a variety of different teacher-student distances. To demonstrate authority, a teacher addressing students with a discussion question may choose to stand behind the lectern. When interrogating a student, the teacher may stand behind the podium. By standing near the student and listening to their response, the teacher can demonstrate concern for the student. The teacher may walk in front of the lectern and in the teacher's corridor during group discussions. Teachers can guide students through the text using visual, auditory, and movement modalities. Teachers can organize enrichment activities to assist students in reviewing the text during the post-reading stage. Students can benefit from post-reading activities that assist them in reviewing the text. Teachers can utilize modal resources such as cards and drawings to assist students in synthesizing text and generating positive outcomes. Active output can be activated using modal resources such as cards and drawings. Notably, when implementing various meanings, teachers should avoid modalities. Utilization of modal resources should not be considered redundant. If a single modal resource can convey the intended meaning, avoid designing an excessive number of modal resources. For instance, using text-only modalities during a pre-reading activity can assist students in comprehending the issues they must consider. Adding video or audio only confuses students. However, teachers must consider combining modal resources to achieve the desired effect. A mix of modal resources. For example, when explaining text, teachers can use underlining, bold fonts, red fonts, etc. to emphasize key points. For example, teachers can use underlining, bold type, and red type to highlight key points in the text. But that doesn't mean using more modal resources in the classroom is better. That is not to say that incorporating more modal resources into the classroom is a good thing. Teachers should exercise caution when selecting modal resources in order to avoid the "modal overload" associated with multimodal instruction. The teacher should exercise caution when selecting modal resources and avoid overcrowding the classroom. Additionally, teachers must be adept at utilizing computer-assisted multimedia devices such as power points, which contain a variety of modal resources. The quality of powerpoint presentations used in class is critical to the teaching and learning process.

Assessing reading comprehension through the use of multimodal forms. Teachers encourage student participation through a variety of assessment methods. They attempt to incorporate gallery walks, poster walls, audiobooks, and mini-theatre into their assessment methods in addition to the traditional pre-class lectures and group discussions to enrich assessment methods and promote reading through assessment. For example, an electronic evaluation form may require students to rate themselves and one another individually or in small groups. This will increase the effectiveness of reading instruction and learning, while also broadening students' perspectives and ensuring their individual development through multimodal assessment and interaction [17]. Additionally, students can communicate and share their work with the guidance of the teacher. This can take the form of a gallery tour or a discussion. The teacher divides the class into sections and distributes discussion questions and materials to individual desks. This table is for students to read and provide direct feedback on paper, whether lengthy or brief, or to highlight key phrases with which they strongly disagree. Rather than communicating,

consider writing your thoughts directly on paper. After a few minutes, the group moves to the next table to contribute to the previous group's comments, either directly or through responses to previous students' comments. This process is repeated until each group has read and responded to all of the material. The group takes turns speaking on the way back to the starting point, synthesizing all the ideas on the paper and reporting. Through idea cross-pollination on paper, each member can visualize the diverse perspectives of others in the class on the same subject, which aids in the correction of cognitive biases and the acquisition of new inspiration. And, at the end of the day, ideas presented on paper may be richer and more diverse than those discussed orally. Visitors can update the character portrait, relationship diagram, poem, cartoon, or final product from the gallery walk above on the poster wall. Poster walls enable students to connect their reading experiences with one another and generate new ideas. The spirit of inquiry, discernment, and respectful inclusion should pervade every corner of the classroom and every moment, allowing for collisions of ideas and bursts of inspiration. Additionally, it can assist teachers in developing assessment tasks and evaluation activities from a multimodal perspective, allowing students to comprehend the story's cultural connotations.

3 Conclusion

When applied to the teaching of reading, meaning production, and discourse analysis in the English language, multimodal theory can help to alleviate some of the difficulties associated with present reading classroom training. Picture, table, video, sound, and text in the teaching process help to organize activities, create an authentic learning environment for students, engage multiple senses such as sight, hearing, touch, and feeling to motivate students to participate actively in English learning, and improve students' language skills as well as their attitudes toward reading.

In addition, there are various advantages to incorporating multimodal theory into English language training, as previously mentioned. In terms of students, it accommodates a range of learning styles and gives varied linguistic input for different student types; for example, visual students can use images or videos, auditory students can use audio, and so on. Also, more effective at mobilizing students' autonomy and motivation, coordinating classroom movement and ebb, and contributing to a more pleasant classroom environment, it has been shown to be Students' ability to comprehend and recall abstract linguistic knowledge can be improved by the employment of multiple symbolic modal resources, according to a knowledge transfer perspective. Other non-verbal symbols can assist students in expressing and understanding content that is difficult to express and understand in words alone. This can aid students in better understanding and remembering the teaching content. Second, studies have demonstrated that using many modal symbols and media tools in reading teaching is consistent with the age and cognitive features of junior high school children, and that using them has been found to boost students' interest in and attention to reading.

It follows that teachers can segment the instructional materials according to their language proficiency, cultural connotation, and literary type in order to highlight the texts' strengths. Additionally, when designing educational sessions, teachers must use a limited number of symbols from a range of sources to avoid confusion. Students can

be engaged and motivated through the use of a variety of instructional modalities and symbols. However, this does not imply that the greater the number of modalities and symbols used, the more effective the instructional effect will be. When adding new modalities to instruction, there is a risk of disrupting the learning process, diverting students' attention, and impairing their ability to learn to read. Teachers must as a result select the most effective combination of modalities in order to maximize the teaching effect. They must also design activities that are moderately difficult and appropriate for students with varying levels of English language proficiency.

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