Digital Multimodal Composing Usage in EFL Secondary Classroom
A Study of In-Service EFL Teachers' Perception

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, EFL teachers continually strive to improve their efforts to provide learners with multimodal resources in the classroom due to the rapid development of the digital era in the language learning environment. Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC) has been proposed to be an engaging tool in language learning to provoke learners' exploration and understanding of the various text topics. This current paper reports findings on the perspective of in-service EFL teachers regarding the use of the DMC in secondary classrooms. It is necessary to get the views from the teachers on DMC usage in the classroom by considering the elements of text design such as linguistics, audio, visual, gestural, and spatial modes. The qualitative case study was employed in this study by having 6 in-service EFL teachers from Central Java, Indonesia as the participants. The questionnaire and interview were used to gather the data. The findings show positive and negative perception. For example, the participants are aware of the literacy changing from traditional to multimodal composing regarding the elements design. They tend to utilize video and English movies as the materials. They prefer employing video projects and posters as DMC tasks to build learners' motivation. DMC can emotionally provoke the learner's interest and understanding of the genre-based text. Another perception is related to the adequacy of the DMC as materials preparation. The findings significantly recommend cultivating the EFL teacher's readiness to cope with digital multimodal text usage in the classroom.

Keywords: Digital multimodal composing, EFL classroom, In-service EFL teacher's perception.

1. INTRODUCTION

The necessity of using technology has become more advanced for all levels of ages in providing tools and information in the education system which are increasingly multimodal (Tan & Matsuda, 2020; Oakley, Wildy, & Berman, 2018). Multimodal literacy has replaced the traditional conception of literacy as the capability to read and write not only from printed texts (Miller & McVee, 2012). These challenges have brought many usages of multimodal texts in meaning-making today. It is thus because the texts that are read are diverse and contain a variety of ways to understand things deeply (Jewitt, Bezemer & O`Halloran, 2016). Emerging technologies have helped to generate the term "multimodal compositions". Therefore, students, nowadays have learned a variety of methods for utilizing media and multimodal texts to cooperate, communicate, and create to get involved in the digital universe. (Alvermann, 2015).

Concerning the teacher's practice on multimodal texts usage related to technology in the language learning classroom, the term Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC) is a latest form of using various modes by utilizing technology to inform the texts to students to get a deep understanding (Jiang, 2017; Hafner & Ho, 2020). Few pieces of research related to exploring the student's digital multimodal composing in the Indonesian EFL context have been done to view how language teachers may now investigate the benefits of DMC for EFL learning to the rising technology in Indonesia's shifting pedagogic scene (Ilmi, Retnanigdyah & Munir, 2020; Wulan, Drajati & Supriyadi, 2022).

Many studies have investigated how language learners' multimodal composing by utilizing technology in doing it. The studies conducted mostly were related to how learners developed multimodal texts, and they investigated digital multimodal text of students' writing composition to gain meaning-making of the texts given

in the classroom (Ganapathy & Seetharam, 2016; Shin, Cimasko & Yi, 2020; Lim & Polio, 2020; Shepard-Carey, 2020). Meanwhile, studies on EFL teachers' perception on multimodal composing usage need to be considered in terms of access, design and putting it in classroom practice. Therefore, this current study tried to investigate the Indonesian EFL teacher's voices on DMC usage after they were provided with the knowledge of multimodal practices in teaching English in secondary-level classrooms.

Teachers should also consider the multimodal literacy performs in their classroom since the media they use currently are using various modes, which is multimodal (Choi & Yi, 2015; Sukyadi & Hermawan, 2018; Dressman, 2020; Tan, Zamit, D`Warte & Gearside, 2020; Bachtiar, 2021). More research must be done on multimodal text usage as well as technical proficiency. For this reason, determining EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of DMC as a multimodal literacy strategy in secondary-level classrooms is the investigative goal of the current study.

Since the study focus is on the teacher's perception of using digital multimodal composing in the EFL classroom, thus the research question of this present study is "How are EFL teachers' perception on the DMC usage as their multimodal literacy practices in secondary EFL classroom?". It has the purpose to find and describe EFL in-service teachers' voices on their usage of DMC as part of their multimodal instructional processes by integrating the technology for their learners in the classroom context. Regarding the research question and purposes of this present study, the significance of the study asserts that the finding would be an essential reference to the next research related to multimodality in language learning. It also provides views of multimodal pedagogical practices in EFL language instructional process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In analysing the EFL in-service teachers' perception on using DMC in their classroom, some references were used as the frameworks in this study. They are the terms of digital multimodal composing (DMC), and teachers' perception of multimodality.

2.1. Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC)

The term Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC) utilized in this work initially borrows from the idea of multiliteracies to improve multimodal literacy generated from The New London Group (1996). It makes an assertion based on the consideration of how literacy teaching may prepare learners for a changing world (Tour & Barnes, 2021). This is in line with the technological advancement in language learning that many teachers utilize digital texts which are varied in modes (audio,

visual, images, gestures, etc). Those digital texts contain semiotic resources which are called digital multimodal which gives rise to the meaning-making of the texts as literacy practices, including Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC) (Mills, 2016).

DMC has evolved into the practices of multiliteracies (Early, Kendrick & Potts, 2015) that influences learners' identities and motivation for studying a second or foreign language. In contrast, DMC in L2 education concerns on the activities that encourage students to use digital technologies to create texts in a variety of semiotic modalities, including writing, image, and sound (Hafner, 2015). Jiang and Ren (2020) further mention that using DMC by teachers in L2 classrooms can provide a variety of ways for learners to display and negotiate their identities, encouraging greater commitment to L2 learning. The examples of DMC implementation in the EFL context are video making, audio podcasting, and creating posters and infographics using Canva.

Considering the teacher's role in language teaching instruction using DMC, Siegel (2012) found that teachers undergo under-prepared, because of the digital and multimodal knowledge absence in their program training of professional. Whereas DMC requires a wide range of advanced knowledge and understandings (Tour & Barnes, 2021). Thus, since digital technology is widely used in classrooms in Indonesia and students are expected to use a variety of learning styles, further research into the use of DMC is necessary.

The phases of DMC implementation that were introduced and instructed to be designed by the EFL teachers in this study were taken from Hafner and Ho (2020). The steps are (1) pre-design, (2) design, (3) sharing, and (4) reflection. Pre-design is the stage where learners plan their DMC projects by completing teacher instructions. In this phase, teacher-student interaction is crucial. The learners create rough drafts of digital multimodal texts throughout the design phase. As technology and metalanguage need to be fixed at this time, the function of the instructor must be taken into consideration.

The following step is the sharing session, where learners should present their results to their peers and the teacher. In the sharing step, the learner's preferred platform is utilized. The final section is reflection when students get the chance to evaluate their work. Promoting L2 learners' writing development using various modes is needed in this stage because EFL learners need to gain more opportunities to learn more language functions and multiple affordances.

2.2. Teacher's Perception on Multimodality

Historical, political, social, and cultural factors influence perception (Halloway, 2012 as cited in Julinar, 2018). Studies related to teachers' perception of

multimodality have been conducted, for example, Yi and Choi (2015), and Jiang and Luk (2016). The findings show that multimodality tasks could provide motivation stimulation for learners, such as there are existences of challenges, control, curiosity, cooperation, and recognition. All of the terms affect learners' motivation in completing assignments. Another study related to teachers' perception of multimodality also uncovers a positive impact since multimodality provides facility to advance literacy in the aspect of cognitive benefit (Antonietti, 2006 as cited in Julinar 2018), for example, better understanding, memorization, implementation, also metacognition. Therefore, teachers are found to appreciate multimodality usage in the classroom.

Another study related to teachers' perception and readiness for the use of multimodality has shown the findings of important implications. The scope of literacy for teacher education needs to be expanded to arrange teachers with various modes of using technology in the instructional process (Ajayi, 2011). Meanwhile, the studies related to digital multimodal usage from the teacher's voices are still in infancy in Indonesia. Therefore, the present study investigated the teacher's perception of digital multimodal composing in secondary EFL classrooms.

The teacher's perception of digital multimodal composing (DMC) in this present study comprises some aspects to be explored. The term like technology usage, the design element of multimodal text, and various modes of provided texts verbal and non-verbal, such as written text, speech, music, gesture, images, photographs, and so on (Mills & Unsworth, 2017) are used in the EFL teacher's perception investigation. Also, the EFL in-service teachers' perceptions were investigated in terms of positive and negative ones of the DMC usage in their classroom, especially focusing on reading and writing skills instruction in this study.

3. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study method to discover the digital multimodal composing usage phenomenon and ascertain the opinions of in-service EFL teachers. In the light of the qualitative approach, the researcher attempts to investigate actions and meanings as they reveal the possibility that influences how the events process (Hamied, 2017). Considering the qualitative case study, the investigation addresses the technically unique situation in depth and within its real-life context.

Considering the participants in this study, there were six EFL in-service teachers participated in the study; four of them work in junior high schools and two in senior high schools. Before gathering the data from the participants, they were informed and collected to get multimodality information and DMC practices views in the classroom. Therefore, there was a certain requirement for the participants; they must be able to use standard technology, for example, a computer or laptop in the classroom.

The instruments used to collect the data were a google documents questionnaire, a zoom meeting interview, and a WhatsApp interview. The authors also tried to collect information from the zoomed-in classroom observation to obtain more specific DMC practice and tie it to the stated perspective. To clearly understand the ideas that the participants wanted to express in their course, the documents of the teacher's lesson plan were also examined.

The framework used to analyse the data was using Hafner and Ho (2020) of Digital Multimodal Composing which comprises of four phases practices (Pre-Design, Design, Sharing, and Reflection). The teacher's perception framework was based on the design element, a technology used, material preparation, and cognitive process of DMC usage during the instruction. The DMC phases were implemented by the participants with different topics one another based on their teaching and learning goals in EFL classroom context. The analysis was done by relating the DMC phases process implementation and how the participants perception of it.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In reporting the findings of this study, there are some aspects to be included in the investigation based on Hafner and Ho (2020) without neglecting the phases of DMC usage in the instructional process (pre-design, design, sharing, and reflection). Those aspects are digital or technology usage, digital multimodal texts preparation as classroom media, digital multimodal composing resources including the design element, learner's motivation of engaging in DMC task completion, and assessment using DMC for their learners.

Before the researchers gathered the data from the participants in this study, there was one occasion to the participants to get to know what and how DMC was implemented in their reading and writing skill instruction. Three meetings were conducted to provide the participants with overviews and examples of the DMC phases they could apply in their teaching and learning process.

Thus, the four stages of DMC (pre-design, design, sharing, and reflection) were practiced, and the data analysis results comprised of teacher's perception on the DMC implementation were explored to generate the question in this investigation. The focuses of this study were mostly on the aspects of DMC usage based on the teacher's perception on the technology usage, digital multimodal texts preparation, learner's motivation, and the assessment using DMC in EFL context. Therefore,

the followings are the investigated aspects analysis results of DMC usage.

4.1. Teacher's Perception on Technology Usage

All participants in this study gave positive responses to the technology usage in the question of whether they often use technology in the language classroom or not. From the responses, the forms of technology usage which mostly used were video and audio podcasting. It is consistent with the claim that using podcasts and videos to provide students with media will increase students' motivation and comprehension of the texts (Jiang, 2017). Another response is power point usage in delivering the lesson materials by implementing digital multimodal texts. The following is further participants' responses of their perception on technology usage in instructional process.

Table 1 demonstrates how teachers' perception of using digital technologies in the classroom. Additionally, they stated in the interview that using basic tools (power points) in the classroom was straightforward because power point was a regular part of their preparations for in-class media, and their understanding of using the computer standards was sufficient. They claimed that although technology may help students understand authentic texts on a deeper level, teachers still had to engage students in the activities directly when presenting new information about the texts.

Regarding the application used by the participants in this study, Canva was the most applicable to compose multimodal text. Meanwhile, one in-service teacher in this study has applied pot generator for the learners to compose multimodal text easily. Also, they continued to use video as their teaching media to get learner's understanding of the text. It can be inferred that the changes in instruction from traditional to digital nuance have influenced composition to be multimodal (Miller & McVee, 2020). Game application that was applied was in the form of matching vocabulary or simple sentence with picture or visual image. One teacher had used it and she enjoyed using game application which contained pictures and vocabularies using simple matching to gain EFL student's memory in word's definition which later used in the multimodal composition. Therefore, the EFL teachers in this study gave perception on the use of technology in the DMC project as a positive value for their learners since it gave meaningful experiences and opportunities to create multimodal composing using their creativity.

4.2. Teacher's Perception on the Digital Multimodal Texts Preparation

Mostly the participants did not have obstacles in preparing the digital multimodal text as the lesson materials. However, they expressed dissatisfaction with the time and efforts required to develop the multimodal texts that are fixed with the learning objectives. They addressed the time management clarification by referring to the difficulty factor for multimodal texts that matched to the learning objectives in their instruction. It has relation with the technology usage perception which mentioned that the teachers sometimes found there were a lot of address links appeared in the internet when they typed the keywords of the texts. However, the participants have already shifted from the traditional to digital design of the texts by considering some elements. The following is the element of multimodal texts that they prepared.

Table 2 shows the detailed amount responses of the materials design, and the elements that the participants prepared were mostly visual, audio, and video. It was related to the previous response that they preferred video and audio podcast. The positive perception was expressed in terms of accessibility of multimodal texts resources. They also perceived that there is positive value; innovation has been made in their way of teaching. Again, the use of DMC has given a deep impact to the preference of using technology in teaching and understanding multimodal texts (Miller & McVee, 2020).

They also stated no constraints on downloading the authentic texts of various modes through internet although they had to provide more efforts regarding the time management in preparing the multimodal texts. The materials of using digital multimodal composing for the learner's project were taken from you-tube, and some

Table 1. Teacher's perception on the technology usage

Question aspects	Teacher's Response
Providing media in the classroom, using video or podcast or other application	Video and audio podcast
Providing media using power point in the classroom	Power point is prepared in almost every meeting
Using laptop or computer in the classroom	Always utilizing laptop in the classroom as the teaching tool for them.
Providing Application to get learner's motivation and understanding of the texts.	Canva, plot generator, offline game application.

Table 2. Design element from the digital multimodal texts as media and materials preparation

Design element	Responses
Visual / image	6 participants
Audio/ Mp3 and Mp4	6 participants
Audio visual	6 participants
Video (audio visual elements)	4 participants
Gesture	2 participants

websites (which they did not mention the name of the web-sites). It can be stated that the teacher's perception on the design element was sufficient and practical in term of multimodal text usage.

The problem faced by the participants was the way to search the link that needed to be more considered because a lot of links appeared in the address search. All participants agreed, however, that it was simple to obtain the numerous multimodal texts that were published on websites. Also, they stated that those multimodal composing examples can be used as teaching and learning of writing. Therefore, DMC usage in terms of the design element prepared by the EFL teacher can be employed without any durable obstacles.

4.3. Teacher's Perception on the Learner's Motivation

All participants agreed that learner's motivation increase when they were given digital multimodal composing task or project. In this case, the shift from traditional to using digital tools and various modes to understand the texts has changed the classroom atmosphere (Jiang & Ren, 2020). Responses from the participants related to why the learners were more motivated in learning and completing the task of digital multimodal composing comprised of some aspects, such as the topic of the text, learner's feeling, and the element design.

The responses were (1) the content or topic of the texts using digital multimodal were more varied and interesting, (2) the learners felt more challenged to the meaning making of the text content, (3) the element design, such as how the audio, visual, gestures, including images which have colourful performance of the multimodal texts have made the learners comfort and attractive to be understood with their critical imagination, and (4) when using video, the learners more focused on the text understanding. Therefore, the multimodal teaching has elicited learners with understanding of multimodal composing utilized in the teaching and learning.

On the other hand, although the learners were more critical and creative, it was also found that two teachers in this study gave perception that the internet connection experienced by their learners was one of the constraints occurred when applying digital multimodal composing tasks. The reason was because the learners neglected the task completion if there were internet problems. Many learners did not complete the DMC projects when they had internet connection problem. Problems of internet connection indeed has influenced the learner's motivation in finishing DMC assignments.

4.4. Teacher's Perception on the Assessment Using DMC in EFL context

Regarding the DMC usage in assessment, all participants had planned and practiced the DMC tasks in the instruction. The projects they created were video making project for senior high school, and digital writing of infographics for junior high school. Also, there was one participant who developed task of plot generator by asking the learners of junior school to create text plot. The phases of DMC were applied here in the assessment, comprises of pre-design, design, sharing, and reflection.

The perception on the first and second phases of DMC implementation showed positive and negative ones. The positive values were from the leaner's motivation when preparing DMC task completion. The teachers mentioned that learners were more creative, for example in browsing and arranging the visual as image attached in the poster and Canva. Another positive value was they could design the text with the elements they created outside the classroom. It provoked the learner's motivation in understanding the DMC tasks. However, the negative value appeared when there was internet connection during the DMC tasks completion.

Regarding the third and fourth phases of DMC usage in the assessment, it can be inferred that DMC usage was one of the most challenging ways for the learners as it is stated by two participants in this study. Another three participants gave perception that students at secondary school preferred DMC tasks since they could have more time to review their writing before they shared it in any platform, such as zoom presentation, posters, media social and Canva writing. It would make them become more creative to express their ideas. However, as the students need to get accustomed to using the online digital tools in the classroom, there was a negative perception related to the technical issue related to DMC utilization of live worksheet. It required more familiarity and effort from both teachers and students to use.

The teachers in this study considered the components of grammar, lexicality, inventiveness, accuracy, and aesthetics about the assessment aspects of DMC usage, and all should be appropriate with the topics chosen in the lesson. Although they had already included all the relevant assessment criteria in the DMC project's rubric, they were still uncomfortable with the subjective nature of the scoring system because it was being used to both the text content and the design components of the student projects. One of the participants said that by the teacher's comprehension of the DMC phases in their assessment administration, it may be minimized. Their perception was they need to be more familiar with the phases of DMC usage in the assessment and make themselves more having self-efficacy and knowledgeable about the DMC.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In reporting the conclusion, there are four parts the essential discussion of teacher's perception on the DMC usage in the instructional process. First, the technology usage as the standard DMC implementation was already well-prepared by the teachers. The EFL in-service teachers in this study already said it was easy to use standard technology usage, for example computer or laptop with certain application they installed in it. Also, they utilized the digital tools to help learners to deep text understanding.

Second is the teacher's perception on the digital multimodal preparation. Like the technology usage, they used the standard digital multimodal text as their teaching media. They preferred to use video which contained audio, visual, gesture, real images, and sometimes they also used audio podcast.

Third is the learner's motivation. It was stated from the interview that they can provoke the learner's motivation by using DMC as their task because students were more interested in all the design elements of the texts prepared. They also liked to complete the tasks with aesthetics elements on their multimodal composing.

The fourth is the teacher's perception on using DMC in assessment process. DMC usage is challenging since the participants in this study had to prepare digital multimodal media and clarity of the task completion instruction. Meanwhile, the teachers could pay more attention on the learners' opportunity to have more time to review their DMC projects before they shared or presented it to the platform they have chosen. Additionally, having a better understanding of the DMC stages can reduce the subjectivity in evaluating the textual information and visual components of DMC assignments.

Overall, it is proposed that more research on DMC usage in EFL context should be done. Additionally, EFL teachers need new viewpoints and instruction on how to use best practice of DMC phases in the classroom. Since DMC allows EFL teachers to transition from conventional teaching to more advanced technological use in the educational process, it can be more useful and beneficial for EFL teaching and learning.

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