

Original Research Article

Application of the Multimodal Discourse Analysis Theory to the Teaching Listening and Speaking Skill

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Abstract: Proficiency in languages enables individuals to communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds, fostering international understanding and collaboration. While the importance of studying English cannot be overstated in today's interconnected world, providing individuals access to a wealth of information, opportunities, and global conversations. It cannot be denied that one of the effective language teaching approaches in general and Speaking & Listening skill, in particular is the Multimodal Discourse Analysis Theory (MDA). Applying MDA in foreign language teaching not only meets the need for innovation in teaching methods but also contributes to improving the quality of education, helps students develop comprehensive communication skills, enhance employability and open doors to a wider range of job opportunities, both locally and internationally.

Keywords: MDA, Approach, Communication, Opportunity, Improve.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an extremely important tool for people to communicate with each other. It is not only a means to convey thoughts and ideas, but also to build friendships, economic relationships and cultural and social relationships. Any language is a gift, knowledge that God has given to humans. It is certain that learning a language will help us develop ourselves, our minds and our personalities. Following the development trend, in foreign languages, English in particular has become an international language and is widely used in many countries around the world. In the context of foreign language education today, focusing on traditional language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing is no longer enough to equip students with the skills needed to communicate effectively in a globalized environment. Students need to be equipped with the ability to understand and use language in a variety of communicative situations, including non-linguistic elements. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) provides a theoretical and practical framework to help students develop this ability. By integrating elements such as images, sounds, gestures and expressions into the teaching process, MDA helps students not only gain a deeper understanding of language, but also grasp how language and non-linguistic elements combine to create meaning in communication. Although MDA has been widely studied and applied in many different fields, the application of this method in foreign language teaching in Vietnam is still limited. It is the fact that the traditional English listening and speaking teaching cannot meet the social high demand for English practical ability. So, based on the multimodal discourse analysis theory, this study brings about a new teaching model of English listening and speaking, a multimodal teaching model, which can help improve students' interest in learning, comprehensive practical ability of English as well as students' autonomous learning ability.

2. MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

2. 1. Definition of Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis is a new and rapidly developing research hot spot in discourse analysis field. Since the 1990s, it has grown in popularity in the Western world. Much of the work in multimodal discourse analysis draws from

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Halliday's (1978,1989a) social semiotic approach to language, a view that considers language as one among a number of semiotic resources (such as gesture, images and music) that people use to communicate, or make meaning, with each other.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) aims to understand the power and meaning of texts that activate many modes (such as visual, verbal, and aural), (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin, 2007; Jewitt, 2009). Besides, when mentioning to Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Gunther Kress (2009) proved that it is a multimodal approach assumes that language, whether as speech or as writing, is one means among many available for representation and for making meaning. In addition, the multimodal discourse analysis method can promote students' intrinsic motivation for learning speaking and listening skill.

Moreover, language and interaction are defined by context and this model seeks to show how contextual meaning & expressed ideas in grammar. Halliday (1978) sees language in four angles: functional in terms of what it can do or what can be done with it, semantic it that it is used to make meanings, contextual in that meanings exchanged are influenced by their social and cultural situations, and semiotic in that it is a process of making meanings (Bowcher 2012). Halliday (1985) also identifies "three kinds of meaning that are embodied in human language as a whole, forming the basis of the semantic organization of all natural languages". These are meta functions, components which operate simultaneously in the semantics of every language, and are defined as ideational Function, interpersonal function and textual function.

- 1) **Ideational Function:** Language is used for describing, reflecting or interpreting the world around us, the individual experience of ourselves, consisting of goings-on, happening, doing, sensing, meaning, and being and becoming.
- 2) **Interpersonal Function:** Language is used for having communication or interaction with people, establishing and maintaining relations with them, influencing other people's behavior, expressing viewpoints of our own on the things in the world, and eliciting or changing other people's points of view. In this way, language is used to enable people to participate in communications, take own their roles, and express their own and understand others' feelings, attitude and judgements.
- 3) **Textual Function:** It refers to the fact that language itself has a mechanism to turn a random list of sentences into a living passage by organizing any stretch of written or spoken discourse into a coherent and unified text. Therefore, in textual function, language is used to relate what is said or written to the real world or other linguistic events.

Later scholars' research ideas on multimodal discourse analysis theory can be divided into two categories:

- 1) **Internal construction:** The construction of the theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis Machin and Van Leeuwen (2007) investigated the development of multimodal grammar construction, while Scollon and Scollon (2003) delved into the correlation between symbolic resources and social life. Norris (2004) summarized a theoretical framework to analyze multimodal communication interactions using a multitude of real-life communication examples. Overall, research on the internal construction direction of multimodal discourse analysis theory primarily focuses on addressing issues that require clarification, such as the problems that arise in the construction process of multimodal grammar, the ways to clearly distinguish modes of different dimensions and the interpretation methods of different dimensional modes.
- 2) **External Connection:** The guiding role of multimodal discourse analysis theory in foreign language teaching According to Dressman (2019), the complementarity of symbolic resources is crucial in analyzing the multi-modal cooperative phenomenon in the second language classroom. According to Halliday (1978), there is a connection between symbolic systems and modes in social semiotics. He suggested that every extended plan contains methods with distinct characteristics. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020) argue that human communication usually involves multiple modes rather than just one. This implies that multimodal discourse is a linguistic phenomenon that utilizes various sensory organs, communication methods, and symbolic resources for effective communication. For example, illustrations in high school English textbooks can effectively help students increase their understanding of text situations. In daily contact, when facing the younger generation, we should speak in a relaxed and lively tone to show concern and narrow the distance, while when facing the elders, we should talk politely and calmly to show respect and highlight etiquette. To better express ideas in WeChat chat, the text will be sent simultaneously to assist the expression and make the communication more vivid.

Kress, Gunther & Van Leeuwen (2001) state the key aspects of multimodality, applications in discourse analysis and key components of multimodality in discourse analysis as follows:

2.2. Key Aspects of Multimodality

Multiple Modes of Communication: Multimodality emphasizes that communication often happens through multiple channels simultaneously, like a combination of text and visuals in a magazine article or video with accompanying audio.

Interplay of Modes: The different modes are not isolated; they interact to create richer and more nuanced meanings. For example, gestures can enhance spoken language, or images can complement or contradict the accompanying text.

Contextual Understanding: Multimodal analysis considers the context in which communication occurs. The setting, audience, and purpose all influence how different modes are used and interpreted.

Dynamic and Evolving Nature: With advancements in technology and media, new forms of multimodal communication continue to evolve. Examples include social media posts that blend text, images, emojis, and videos.

2.3. Applications in Discourse Analysis

Media and Advertising: Multimodal analysis is widely used to understand how advertising campaigns use images, music, and text to convey messages and persuade consumers.

Digital Communication: Online platforms often combine text, images, video, and hyperlinks, requiring a multimodal approach to analyze how these elements interact.

Educational Materials: Analyzing textbooks, instructional videos, and other educational resources can reveal how different modes are used to enhance learning.

Political Communication: Understanding political campaigns requires analyzing speeches, social media posts, and visual symbols, as they work together to influence public opinion.

2.4. Key Components of Multimodality in Discourse Analysis

Multiple Semiotic Modes: Beyond text, other semiotic resources such as images, videos, gestures, typography, and spatial arrangements contribute to meaning. For example, a political speech may include spoken words, visual symbols, and audience reactions, all conveying nuanced messages.

Intermodality: This concept refers to how different modes interact and complement each other. For instance, an educational video combines visual illustrations with spoken explanations, where each mode reinforces and expands the content.

Contextual Influence: Multimodal discourse analysis considers how the context affects the interpretation of each mode. This includes factors such as the audience, cultural background, and medium of communication.

Dynamic Relationships: Modes can have varying importance and interact dynamically within a given context. For example, in a film, the visual elements might carry more weight than the dialogues.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Through the conceptual interpretation of multimodal discourse analysis theory and its integration with the skills in English teaching, this study will give necessary listening and speaking teaching examples, and combine testing methods, questionnaire survey methods, classroom observation methods, interview methods and specific experimental data, while paying attention to the changes in students' performance. They also pay as much attention to the changes in students' classroom performance and the realization of self-efficacy, and place the explicit and implicit factors of first-year students' English listening and speaking skill in the same important position. According to Liu (2024), traditional teaching methods heavily rely on text and oral instruction, emphasizing teacher explanations and student memorization. This approach may be relatively singular in information delivery and might overlook individual differences among students. In contrast, multimodal teaching methods integrate various sensory experiences, such as visual and auditory, creating a more enriching and interactive learning environment. For instance, the use of videos and charts can assist students in better understanding complex concepts, while interactive games and group discussions encourage active student participation and critical thinking. Multimodal teaching methods are better suited to accommodate diverse learning styles, fostering students' active learning and in-depth understanding.

4. METHODOLOGY

The class was selected for a second-semester teaching experiment. The class consisted of 50 students, and one of the compulsory English textbooks was chosen as the listening and speaking material for the class. Before the experiment, a pre-test was conducted using the listening and speaking section of the monthly test paper to assess if there were any differences in listening and speaking levels. After that, a post-test was conducted using the listening and speaking section of the monthly test paper to determine if the student's academic performance improved after a multi-modal foreign language teaching semester. The first period was an experimental class that used the multi-modal external teaching mode and was guided by the theory of multi-modal discourse analysis. The second period was the comparison class and used the traditional teaching mode. To minimize irrelevant variables, the researcher taught both English listening and speaking courses simultaneously and used consistent teaching materials and progress for the class. Interactive practice promotes listening and speaking.

Auditory interactive teaching strategies emphasize using listening activities to facilitate learning and understanding. In a multimodal teaching environment, auditory elements such as speech explanations, audio materials, and music are used to deepen students' understanding of the learning material. Auditory learning is crucial for developing language skills, understanding complex concepts, and enhancing memory. Additionally, auditory learning can improve students' attention and concentration, especially when dealing with content that requires deep thinking and reflection (Liu, 2024). With this theory, at the very beginning of the class, the teacher shows some pictures, videos, or audio materials to the students, leading the students to the subject of the class by asking some questions. Then the students are asked to present their ideas orally. Because of the preparation work before class, students usually have less anxiety and shyness but more

confidence to express their ideas. After the presentation, the teacher offers encouraging comments, namely, the praise-centered comments.

Then the teacher shows the students various audio and video materials. After showing one material, the students do the multimodal exercises, such as answering some questions, summarizing the main idea of the material, imitating recordings, and doing some role plays by referring to the video material. Moreover, students can be organized to do some debate or group discussion etc.

In brief, doing exercises in class is not only to correct the answers but participate in various activities involving listening and speaking.

Finally, at the end of class, the teacher shows students a beautiful English song, and asks students to write down the lyrics, which can bring good feeling to students, making them construct knowledge in a more relaxing and comfortable environment. In short, multimodal in-class practice strengthens and realizes the language input and output by visual sense, hearing sense, speaking and action.

Writing promotes listening. After class, students have some listening homework to do, which includes both audio and video materials. Students are required to write after-listening report, and send their reports to online group sharing area, so that students can share their reports, and point out each other's mistakes.

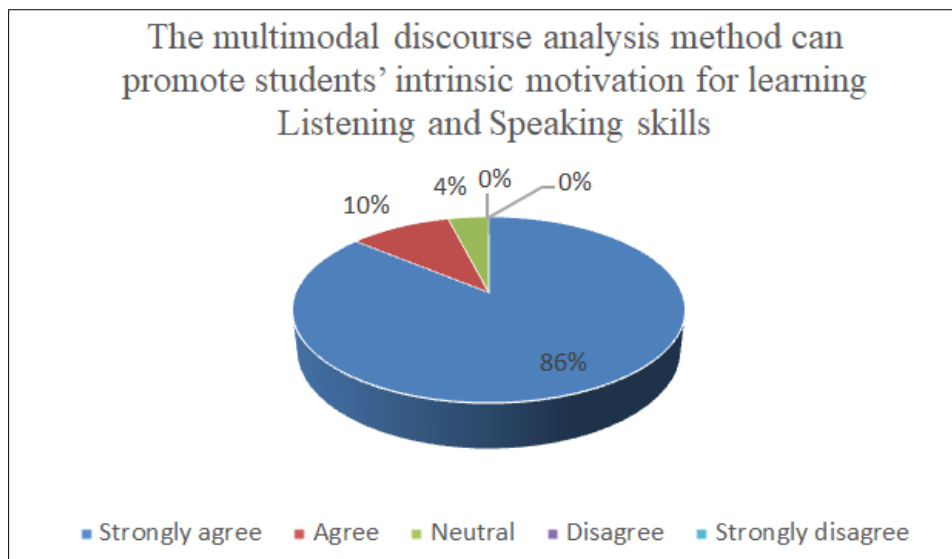
The purpose of doing so is to encourage students to do the listening homework carefully. At the same time their writing ability can be enhanced. Besides, students are required to find some materials that they are interested in, read it and record it into mp3 form by the software. This kind of requirement can make students focus more on their pronunciation and tone.

5. RESULT

The research was carried out in a class for 50 first-year students in Sai Gon University and the result indicated the multimodal discourse analysis method can be useful in teaching and learning languages. The finding can be listed as follows:

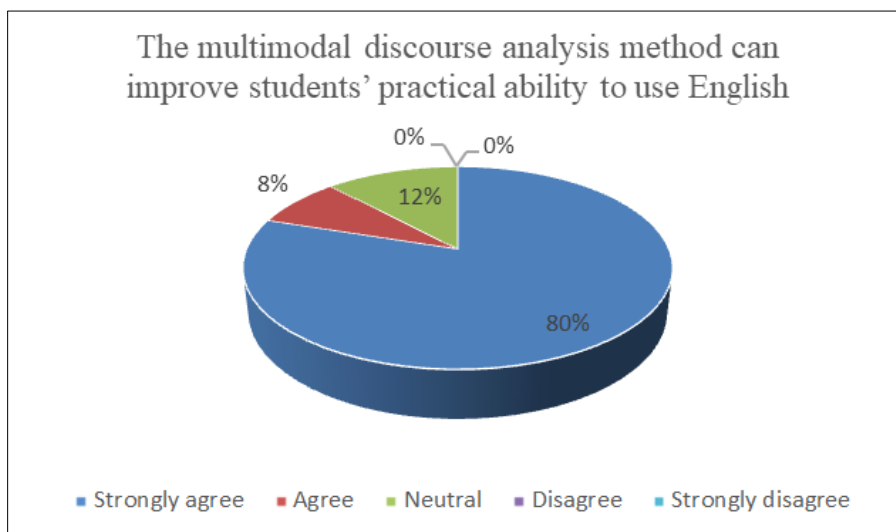
5.1. Findings from Research Question 1

The multimodal discourse analysis method can promote students' intrinsic motivation for learning speaking and listening skill.



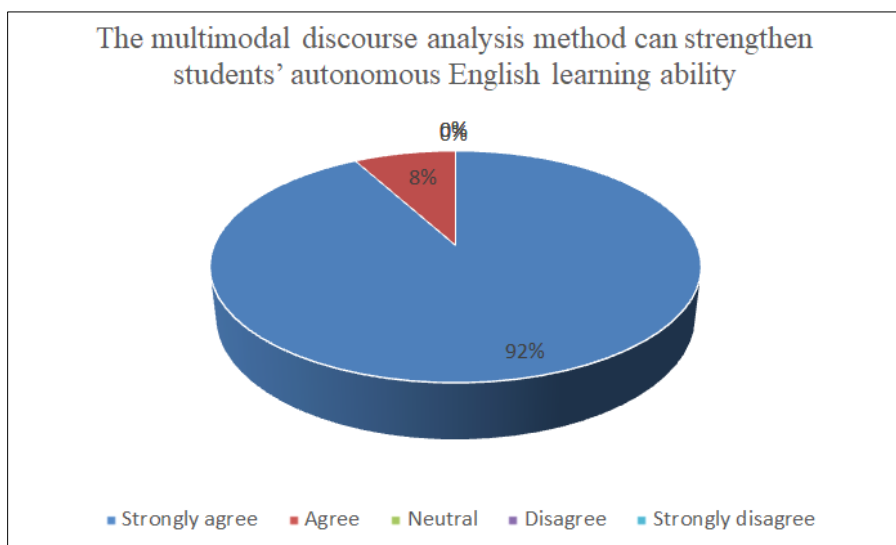
Concerning students' attitudes towards the multimodal discourse analysis method can promote students' intrinsic motivation for teaching and learning Listening and Speaking skills, it is clear from Chart 1 that the number of students who agreed that The multimodal discourse analysis method can promote students' intrinsic motivation for teaching and learning Listening and Speaking skills made up 96% of the total and 86% of them showed that they strongly agreed, 10% of them showed that they agreed and 4% of them showed that they feel neutral with this statement. These results showed that the students recognized the usefulness of the multimodal discourse analysis method in promote students' intrinsic motivation for teaching and learning Listening and Speaking skills.

5.2. Findings from Research Question 2



The results showed that the multimodal discourse analysis method can improve students' practical ability to use English. As it can be seen from the chart, this was clarified by all the students who gave the agreement of 88 % in “agree” and “strongly agree”.

5.3. Findings from Research Question 3



The data in the above chart 3 indicated that all of the students (100%) perceived that the multimodal discourse analysis method can strengthen students' autonomous English learning ability.

With the reflection from students' perception, intrinsic motivation is the drive to do something because it's enjoyable, rather than for external rewards or incentives. It's driven by internal desires, such as: personal satisfaction, curiosity, the pleasure of mastering a skill, job satisfaction, and human connection. We can promote students' intrinsic motivation by exciting their desire to acquire knowledge, cultivating students' self-confidence and helping them establish the sense of achievement. Multimodal teaching model helps promote students' intrinsic motivation by asking students to participate in each teaching activity and finish each task by themselves, make students harbor a novel, comfortable and challenging feeling, which can greatly arouse students interest in learning. Last but not the least, multimodal teaching model lays great emphasis on students' participation in teaching activities. Besides, teacher's proper praise helps students feel excited and happy, and is an extremely valuable spiritual reward. In studying and competing, praise is the motivation that helps learners strive to achieve high results.

When mentioning about improving students' practical ability to use English, language learning is devoted to fundamental theoretical issues in the learning of language by children and adults, including second, heritage, indigenous, and foreign language development, bilingualism, literacy, language representation in mind and brain, language cognition, co-speech gestures, and pragmatics. While, language knowledge cannot be converted into language skill autonomously. The conversion from language knowledge to language skills needs a certain social environment, others' help, necessary study materials and internalizing and constructing way to realize. In the multimodal teaching model, students, teachers, and the critical teaching equipment and set up a social environment, in which, under the guidance of teachers, students carry out various language input and output by taking part in all kinds of activities. This process is also a kind of language internalizing and constructing process. Namely, it is a process for students to improve their practical ability in learning languages.

According to Little (2007, p.26), learner autonomy is “the product of an interactive process in which the teacher gradually enlarges the scope of her learners’ autonomy by gradually allowing them more control of the process and content of their learning”. With the multimodal teaching model, students are asked to search for the materials related to the subject of the class, which can strengthen students' ability to search for useful materials through various resources, such as library, network at the beginning of the lesson. When they join in each in-class activity and finish each learning task, they have to think about how to do it well. When they meet some problems, they have to find some solutions by themselves because the teacher is only the guider and helper of them, but not the exact answer provider, they can enhance their ability to think and solve issues independently. In the whole teaching process, students are active participants and active constructors of knowledge. So, we can say this method can foster the learners’ capacity to self-direct their own learning, which means taking responsibility for the decisions concerning the different aspects of the learning process.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Compared with the traditional teaching model, the newly-designed model provides students multimodal teaching means, multimodal teaching contents and multimodal learning environment, which can make students harbor a novel, comfortable and challenging feeling when having their classes. Furthermore, according to the questionnaire surveys, the multimodal teaching model does better than the traditional one in promoting students' intrinsic motivation for English learning, improving students' practical ability to use English, and promoting students' autonomous English learning ability. Last but not the least, the results of the question tell us that the newly-designed multimodal teaching model is more welcomed among students than the traditional one.

Through literature review and empirical research, it is found that integrating multimodal discourse analysis theory into teaching and learning English, it is beneficial to help students get the best effect in teaching and learning languages. At the same time, we also found many worthy of optimization and urgent room for improvement. For teachers, it is essential for teachers to act as guides in developing students' diverse literacy skills, design their lessons with critical thinking in mind. They should motivate their students to enhance their analytical abilities, approach a topic from various perspectives, and derive conclusions independently. With the help of some means of social media, students can broaden their horizons, develop cross-cultural awareness, enhance national pride, and become new-era talents. One of the vital method for teachers is providing clear and accurate guidance, establishing emotional connections with their students. They are crucial in guiding them toward the right path in life, not just imparting linguistic knowledge. Teachers should set an example in all aspects of learning and life, bridging the emotional divide in their students. This involves giving clear instructions in the classroom and addressing any difficulties or doubts that students may have in their academic and personal lives. Besides, it is necessary for teachers to focus on practical application. Precisely, in English listening and speaking classes, teachers should aim to provide students with real-life scenarios and examples to enhance their learning experience.

Moreover, it's important to take the lead in improving our self-efficacy by communicating effectively. Students must take ownership of their learning and not rely solely on their teachers. By mastering the class rhythm, they can achieve optimal learning outcomes. Regardless of their current level of English listening and speaking, it would be best if they were willing to challenge their thinking, initiate conversations with teachers and peers, divide their learning tasks into smaller goals, and gradually work towards achieving them. This will ultimately lead to an overall sense of improvement in our self-efficacy. In addition, for students, they are encouraged to develop their problem-solving skills in the class. Students should integrate into the class and enhance their interest in learning and be independent and flexible and choose the best listening and speaking strategy according to the text and strive to translate text knowledge into practice. Through continuous optimization and practice, multi-modal teaching is expected to open up a new path for English education around the world and provide students with a more comprehensive and effective learning experience.

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