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MULTIMODAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS

Summary. *The article examines a multimodal approach to teaching writing as an effective method for developing writing skills of students. Writing is a complex task. It is not simply the transmission of our thoughts; it is a process of thinking in which the latter is constructed, refined, and changed during writing and rereading. Writing can be described as a problem-solving activity that is demanding for any writer. This is especially true for students, as the act of writing involves several processes operating simultaneously, which some students, especially beginners, may not be able to master due to limited knowledge and cognitive abilities. It is therefore not surprising that teachers, faced with the complexity of this task, are interested in finding new approaches to teaching writing.*

Multimodal teaching methods are a set of special techniques and methods for organizing the educational process based on the simultaneous use of various forms of information presentation (text, visual, auditory) and digital tools for developing writing skills.

This research aims to contribute to the effective teaching of writing. The relevance of the study is determined by the rapid digital transformation of higher education and the ever present need to develop and improve methods of teaching foreign languages keeping up to date with technological change. The main theoretical foundations of multimodal learning are analysed here and the advantages in the development of critical thinking, creativity and communicative competences are discussed. The authors present practical strategies for implementing a multimodal approach in the educational process and consider the challenges and prospects for its use. The proposed set of multimodal methods and tools helps to improve the quality of students' written work, increases their motivation to study a foreign language, develops digital competencies as well as strengthening critical thinking skills.

Key words: *teaching writing, multimodality, communicative competences, digital technologies, critical thinking, educational process.*

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МУЛЬТИМОДАЛЬНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО НАВЧАННЯ ПИСЬМА

Анотація. У статті розглядається мультимодальний підхід до навчання письма як ефективний метод розвитку письмових навичок студентів. Письмо – складне завдання. Це не просто передача наших думок; це – процес мислення, що потребує певних конструкцій, уточнення та змін під час запису та перечитування. Письмо можна описати як діяльність, спрямовану на вирішення проблем певного характеру. Це особливо важливо для студентів, оскільки виконання письмового завдання включає декілька процесів, що діють одночасно, які можуть бути занадто складними для деяких студентів, особливо початківців, через недостатні знання та обмежені когнітивні здібності. Отже, не дивно, що викладачі зацікавлені в пошуку нових підходів до навчання письму. Мультимодальні методи навчання – це сукупність спеціальних прийомів і способів організації навчального процесу на основі одночасного використання різноманітних форм подання інформації (текстової, візуальної, слухової) і цифрових засобів розвитку навичок письма. Це дослідження має на меті зробити внесок у навчання письма. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена стрімкою цифровою трансформацією вищої освіти та зростаючою потребою у вдосконаленні методики викладання іноземних мов. В статті проаналізовано основні теоретичні основи мультимодального навчання письма, представлено його переваги у розвитку критичного мислення, креативності та комунікативних компетенцій. Автори представляють практичні стратегії впровадження мультимодального підходу в освітній процес, розглядають проблеми та перспективи його використання. Запропонований набір мультимодальних методів та інструментів сприяє покращенню якості письмових робіт студентів, підвищенню їх мотивації до вивчення іноземної мови, розвитку цифрових компетенцій та навичок критичного мислення.

Ключові слова: навчання письма, мультимодальність, комунікативні компетенції, цифрові технології, критичне мислення, навчальний процес.

Introduction. Students in the contemporary world of learning are often distracted by gadgets that come to their rescue at any time. Teachers lose the chance to assess their students' progress fairly, as the outdated system of assessment fails to work in circumstances where AI-dominated technology can complete tasks for learners. The result is clear: learners tend to save time by letting technology do their writing homework for them. As a result, they lose enthusiasm for focusing on learning and give in to the temptation of placing all responsibility on ChatGPT.

The new captivating modes of teaching, where learners' brains are systematically engaged in learning procedures have evolved and become an indispensable part of enthusiastic teachers' practice.

Within this context **the aim** of the research is to investigate how incorporating multimodal strategies in ESL traditional writing instruction would affect students' writing proficiency, their engagement and language acquisition and to identify the most effective practices for integrating multimodal approach into ESL classrooms.

The authors are going to argue for the extensive use of a multimodal approach in teaching writing in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. This approach means integrating multiple modes of communication – visuals and texts, audio resources and digital tools- to keep students engaged and to enhance the language learning outcomes. Multimodality in teaching would more effectively be absorbed into various sensory channels extending beyond that of the more traditional simple exposure to a traditional written text.

To explore more deeply into the functionality of the Multimodal Approach we can give examples of its key elements.

– Audio resources incorporate various listening activities – voice recordings or podcasts, which inspire analytical or reflective writing;

– Texts and visuals integrate videos, charts, images, infographics to prompt writing topics and support narrative or descriptive writing;

– Digital tools involve multimedia software to edit or draft texts, to create blogs on different platforms or the use of collaborative tools, e.g. Google Docs;

– Kinesthetic activities engage learners in physical activities with language elements, e.g. creating posters, comic strips or storyboards;

– Peer collaboration, inspired by multimodal teaching methods, can build collaboration on multimedia projects, e.g. presentations or video strips.

The authors believe that by bridging traditional and modern teaching methodologies this research will provide valuable insights for ESL educators to foster and benefit from a holistic approach to language learning.

Literature review. In recent years there has been an increasing number of published studies describing the huge impact of AI on the educational process.

In their research Malinka, Peresini, Firc, Hujnák and Janus (2023) claim that "higher education must respond adequately and immediately to the increasing quality of tools like ChatGPT. Their quality is already good enough to produce results comparable to the average student. An emphasis on modifying the examination process is inevitable" (Malinka et el., 2023, p. 48). Shiohira (2021) states that apart from its impact on education, AI significantly impacts labour markets, industrial services, agricultural processes, values chains, and the workplace (Shiohira, 2021, p. 36). Moore, Nguyen, Bier, Domadia and Stamper (2022) investigated the ability of GPT-3 to evaluate the quality of student-created test questions and classify them into Bloom's revised taxonomy with no sufficient quality of the result.

There are a substantial number of scientific publications on using a multimodal approach in teaching English. Teston, Previte and Hashlamon (2019) hypothesize that "centralizing material-discursive conditions in multimodal curricula creates opportunities for conversations about more than just design fundamentals" (Teston, Previte, Hashlamon, 2029, p. 200). Donaghy, Karastathi and Peachey (2023) discuss the important concepts of viewing and representing and how these can be incorporated into classroom practice, which is based on the assumption that "multimodality is gaining ground as a focus in language education because contemporary communication is increasingly multimodal in nature" (Donaghy, Karastathi and Peachey, 2023, p. 10).

Many scholars emphasise the importance of multimodal activities in improving students' writing skills. Lim and Polio (2020) have considered three themes that feature multimodal writing tasks in academic contexts: goals and instruction of multimodal writing: "disciplinary versus creative expressions"; linguistic mode in multimodal texts: "written and spoken words"; and tasks of multimodal writing: "individual versus collaborative work"(Lim and Polio, 2020, p. 2–3). In their study Kim and Belcher (2020) compared Korean EFL learners' writing for digital multimodal composing and traditional essay writing regarding syntactic complexity and accuracy and the student's perception of the two tasks. The findings revealed that the learners had generally positive perceptions of multimodal composing, particularly in terms of its effective role in meaning making.

Kalynovska and Koliada (2024) researched the effect of multimodal presentations on the perception and assimilation of information in ESL Academic Writing and Rhetoric Course. The results showed improvement in of students' rhetorical skills and visual literacy.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study lies in the presumption that students will enhance their writing competence provided the following conditions are taken into account:

1) regular stimulation of students independent work; 2) using various multiple modes of communication in teaching writing; 3) encouraging collaboration in multimedia projects.

What challenges do educators and students face when implementing multimodal strategies in ESL classes?

When implementing multimodal strategies, teachers and students may face a number of challenges. For teachers, these challenges may include a lack of training and experience, as not all educators are familiar with multimodal methods or know how to apply them effectively. Limited access to technology, such as interactive whiteboards, computers and the internet, poses a significant barrier to using this approach. Some teachers prefer traditional methods and are unwilling to experiment with multimodal strategies. Students may encounter difficulties of a different nature. Although most of them have technological skills, not all have access to the necessary equipment. The simultaneous use of multiple modalities (e.g., reading, listening, and visual perception) can be challenging and may lead to

cognitive overload. Limited language proficiency can make it harder to comprehend information in a multimodal format, and some students find traditional methods more convenient. The implementation of multimodal technologies may lead to organisational and technical challenges. Multimodal strategies can significantly enhance learning but require careful planning and adaptation to specific conditions. Training courses and workshops on multimodal teaching can help educators improve their qualifications and overcome some difficulties. When working with digital tools, it is important to gradually increase the complexity of materials, ensure variety and apply flexibility in assessing students' work.

Methods

Research Design. To conduct a comprehensive study on the integration of multimodal approach we used the mixed research design based on quantitative (pedagogical experiment; tests to compare academic achievements) and qualitative (observation of participants in the learning process, informal interviews, analysis of the data collected via experimental testing)

Participants. 80 students of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute and State University " Kyiv Aviation Institute" We got support of the teachers of the English language who delivered classes to the students in the educational institutions mentioned above and our colleagues from Ashdon School Essex.

The students completed the questionnaires within 3 months. The participants agreed that the results of the experiment can be treated anonymously.

Instruments and Procedure. In order to study the possibilities of using multimodal approach in educational activities, we decided to choose the classes of English as a philological discipline. The pedagogical experiment was conducted to estimate the influence of multimodal approach in teaching writing on learners' motivation, their cognitive engagement and the improvement of their writing skills. For the study, the authors used mixed methods, such as:

1) questionnaire – surveying students about their experience of multimodal learning;

2) observation – analysis of students' work in a multimodal environment;

3) experiment – implementation of multimodal approaches in the educational process and measurement of changes in the level of writing skills;

4) comparison of traditional and multimodal approaches.

The expected result was supposed to help:
– to analyse scientific theories and approaches to multimodal learning;
– to identify key methods and technologies of multimodal writing teaching;
– to conduct an experimental study using multimodal approaches;
– to assess the impact of a multimodal approach on the level of writing skills.

During the experiment, which lasted 3 months, the students were offered to do the following writing tasks within the concept of multimodal approach.

1) Video-based Writing Prompts: students watch a short video (news report, vlog, TED Talk snippet) and write a reflection, summary, or opinion piece based on it.

2) Infographic Creation: after researching a topic, students design an infographic (using Canva or similar tools) and write an explanatory essay describing the process and the data.

3) Digital Storytelling Projects: students combine text, images, audio narration, and video clips to create a digital story on a chosen topic.

4) Blogging or Vlogging Assignments: students create blog posts or vlogs with written captions, combining writing practice with speaking

6) Social Media Writing Tasks: students write Instagram captions, or Facebook posts as writing practice, learning brevity, audience engagement, and stylistic choices.

7) Collaborative Writing with Visuals: students co-write Google Docs including hyperlinks, images, diagrams, and embedded videos.

Then the students were offered to complete the questionnaire and answer the following questions:

1. Which multimodal task (video writing, podcast scripting, blogging, infographic creation, etc.) did you enjoy the most, and why?

2. Do you feel that working with different media (videos, images, audio) made writing tasks more interesting or more difficult? Please, choose your answer:
More interesting/More difficult/No difference (Explain why)

3. How confident do you feel expressing your ideas in writing after practising through multimodal activities compared to traditional writing tasks? Please, choose your answer: Much more confident/A bit more confident/The same/Less confident (Explain why)

4. Do you think integrating images, videos, and sounds helps you organise your thoughts better when writing? Can you give an example?

5. Would you like more multimodal writing activities in future classes? What types of tasks would you suggest we add?

We believe that the feedback we received will help to improve our teaching strategies in writing lessons.

Analysis of Student Survey Results

Preferred Multimodal Assignments. The majority of students (95%) noted that they enjoyed creating videos or infographics the most, as it allowed them to express their thoughts creatively, facilitated the presentation of information, and made the learning process more engaging. However, some students preferred podcasting, explaining that the process of creating a podcast combines learning with an exciting creative activity.

Impact of Multimodal Assignments on Writing Perception. 90% of students stated that working with various media made writing assignments more interesting, as it helps visualise ideas and makes the process less routine. 6% of students noted that assignments became more challenging, explaining that integrating media required additional effort. The remaining participants (4%) did not notice any difference, believing that the content of the text is more important than its format.

Confidence in Written Expression. The majority of students (86%) felt more confident in written communication, as diverse assignments helped them better structure their thoughts and provided an opportunity to combine text with visual elements. Some students (8%) did not notice significant changes, while 6% reported a decrease in confidence, explaining that the new format seemed difficult for them to master.

Organising Thoughts with Multimedia. Many participants (95%) noted that using images, videos, and sounds helps better organise their thoughts. For example, pictures and videos can create associations that aid in remembering material and structuring narratives logically. At the same time, some students (5%) expressed the opinion that visual elements can be distracting or complicate the writing process.

Desire to Include More Multimodal Assignments in Future Classes. The overwhelming majority (97%) of students expressed a desire to see more multimodal assignments in the future. Among the suggested ideas were interesting options such as creating interactive presentations, working with comics, and collaborative writing in digital environments. However, some students (3%) preferred to retain traditional writing assignments, such as essays, research papers, and reviews, as exams, entrance tests, and academic publications specifically require traditional writing formats.

All in all the survey results have shown that multimodal assignments are generally perceived positively and contribute to increased interest in writing. However, they can also pose challenges for some students, especially due to the need to master new tools. These findings can be considered when designing future curricula to offer a more balanced approach to teaching written communication.

Discussion

The research allows us to specify the most effective methods of teaching writing.

The use of images, videos and infographics helps students develop writing skills through visual and audiovisual channels of perception. The following strategies stimulate creativity, develop analytical thinking and make the learning process more interesting and productive:

– students are offered to choose or create a description of a painting, photograph or illustration;

– a sequence of images is used to create a coherent narrative;

– students describe the details of the picture, express emotions, analyse the symbolism.

Example task: *You can see a picture (photo). Describe what feelings it evokes in you, what elements are most important, how can you interpret its meaning? Write a short essay-analysis.*

Taking into account the results of the research, video stimulates visual and auditory perception and also helps to develop analytical and creative writing.

We offer the following strategies of working with video:

– after watching the video, students write a summary to analyse the main ideas;

– students write a continuation or change the ending of the video;

– students keep a video diary and then convert their thoughts into written form;

– rewriting dialogues from video helps to develop text construction skills.

Example task: *Watch a short documentary about water pollution. Write an argumentative essay about what measures can be taken to combat this problem.*

Infographics present information in a structured form, helping students to better understand complex data.

While working with infographics:

– students explain the information from the infographic, formulating the main ideas.

– students compare two infographics and write an analytical article.

Example task: *Consider the infographic about population growth in different countries. Write a comparative analysis and suggest possible explanations for the differences.*

Audio materials help develop auditory perception, critical thinking, and writing skills, as they stimulate information analysis, structuring of ideas, and formation of arguments. The use of podcasts, dictations, voiced texts and audio discussions makes the process of learning writing more effective and diverse:

– students analyse podcasts, they write essays or abstracts on their basis.

– listening to audiobooks and stories helps to develop style and vocabulary and to understand the structure of the text.

– dictations promote understanding of grammar and punctuation through auditory perception.

– songs develop a sense of rhythm in writing and assist the learning of new lexical constructions.

Example task: *Listen to the story and write a review, paying attention to language and imagery.*

Highlighting previously unresolved parts of the overall problem.

Despite the promise of a multimodal approach to teaching writing, its effective implementation requires further research, improvement of methodologies, and the overcoming of organisational and technological challenges. A multimodal approach to teaching reading (using different modalities–textual, visual, auditory, kinetic, etc.) can be a promising method that increases student motivation and engagement. However, there are some unresolved issues that require further research and improvement. We mean here the requirements for an individualised approach, since there are students who can find difficulty with the sheer abundance of multimedia and who prefer a more traditional approach to study. Another issue that has not yet been sufficiently researched is a possible diverting of students' attention by videos, pictures etc. from the core aim of writing.

Conclusion. The conducted study confirmed the effectiveness of multimodal methods in teaching foreign written language in the conditions of the digital transformation of higher education. The complex methodology, which integrates various modalities of information perception with modern digital tools, has demonstrated a significant superiority over traditional teaching methods. An experimental study convincingly proved that students who studied using multimodal methods achieved higher results in the development of writing skills. The most important result of the study was the confirmation of a direct connection between the use of multimodal methods and the quality of students' written works. The revealed positive correlation between the level of students' motivation and the results of their written work indicates that the integration of various multimodal tasks contributes to the development of students' cognitive and creative abilities, making the writing process more meaningful and motivating. The integration of visual and digital elements improves students' ability to adapt texts to different media formats and audiences and significantly increases the effectiveness of teaching written speech in a foreign language.

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