# The Use of Visual Design in Teaching Speaking: Multimodality in the EFL Classroom

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**Abstract.** This study investigates how the lecturer expresses meaning through visual design and explores the benefit of visual design as one of the multimodality elements for oral communication. This study involved one lecturer in one of the private universities in Indonesia majoring in English education as the participant. The data were taken from the lecturer's video-recorded teaching and interview. Then, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The finding shows that multimodality is necessary for teaching language. In addition, visual design is one of the multimodality elements that are very beneficial to the spoken communication of the EFL classroom. Using the visual design, the lecturer can deliver material for speaking class effectively; convey the message easily in synchronous and asynchronous learning (ASL) of speaking class; encourage students' confidence in speaking, and help students construct meaning-making in oral communication.

**Key words:** multimodality; speaking; and visual design.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's era, digital technology and communication development have led to multimodal communication. Human interaction occurs through speaking and writing and can also be through emoticons, symbols, emojis, emoticons, and pictures. Then, various forms of communication that use multimodal methods also develop rapidly, starting from written, spoken text, videos, images, and audio clips. As Kress and Leeuwen (2001) state, people today communicate through sited configurations of text, image, video, audio, multimedia, and technologically based devices. It means that many people rely on different modes to communicate, and the use of various communication modes in communication is called multimodality.

Furthermore, the use of multimodality in learning has been investigated by some researchers. Oskoz (2016) investigated Spanish learners' perceptions about using digital stories as multimodal texts in writing class. Oakley et al. (2018) found that children's reading, speaking, and writing language skills increased through multimodal digital technology in the form of tablets and open-ended creative applications. Huang (2017), in his multimodal research, found that the use of multimodality in the form of moving image text and sound enabled students to critically check moving image text by paying attention to various modes to obtain structural and ideological interpretations. Then, Elmiana (2019) stated that visual images play an essential role in supporting the effectiveness of teaching materials during a teaching and learning process. In addition, In the classroom, multimodal communication allows students and teachers to use a variety of semiotic modalities, languages, and technologies (Palmeri 2018: 27).

Considering the benefits of multimodality, an English lecturer of one of the private universities in Lampung, Indonesia, has used multimodality in teaching English, mainly speaking. In this study, we want to investigate how the English lecturer uses visual mode in teaching speaking. Some studies have been conducted on multimodality, primarily visual design, but most deal with reading and writing skills. A study that explains how multimodality was incorporated into speaking activities is still limited. Therefore, this study is intended to fill a gap. This study is expected to give a contribution to teaching and learning English speaking skills. Thus, this study explored how the lecturer conveys meaning through visual design in the speaking class and the benefits of visual design in oral communication.

## METHOD

### Research Goal

This research investigates how the lecturer expresses meaning through visual design and explores the benefit of visual design as one of the multimodality elements for oral communication.

It is a qualitative case study. Yin (2009) views a case study as an empirical investigation investigating contemporary phenomena in-depth and in real-life contexts. Based on the theories above, this study used a qualitative approach because the researcher argues that the application of multimodality, particularly visual modes in speaking class, is a case that needs to be investigated. After all, there are still aspects of multimodality indicators that have not been seen in learning. In contrast, without realizing it or not, the lecturer, as the research participant, has applied multimodality in speaking either offline or online. Thus, the implementation of multimodality in teaching speaking needs to be investigated.

### Participant and Data Collection

The participant of the research is one lecturer in a private university in Lampung, Indonesia. In this qualitative research, data collection was obtained from classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Using a combination of data collection methods helps capture a rich and comprehensive picture of the investigated project. This study started by doing initial design which the activities include reviewing the literature, doing a preliminary study, accumulating the pieces of evidence related to the purpose of activities being investigated, developing schemes to know the context of multimodality implementation, defining key components such as objectives and scope of the study. After conducting the initial design step, the next stage is data collection. Observation and semi-structured interviews were used in collecting the data.

Procedures for collecting the data are the authors gathered teaching documents such as lesson plan, teaching and learning materials from the lecturer of speaking class. Next, conducting participant observation by using guiding from observation field note template. Then, constructing a semi-structured interview for the lecturer. After that, the interview was administered to the lecturer.

### Analyzing of Data

The data from observation and semi-structured interviews using thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). It consists of six phases as follows: 1) familiarization, 2) Coding, 3) Looking for themes, 4) Reviewing themes, 5) Defining and naming themes. During this phase, the researchers begin conducting and writing a detailed analysis of each theme. 6) Writing a report.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents research findings and a discussion that answered two research questions mentioned above. They are about how the lecturer uses visual design in teaching speaking and the importance of visual design in oral communication. The detailed information is explained below:

### How the lecturer expresses meaning through visual design in teaching speaking?

This research was conducted in the post-advanced speaking class for the fourth-semester students of the English education study program in a private university in Lampung province, Indonesia. The investigation was carried out from March to August 2021. Lectures were carried out online for 16 meetings. Lecturer applied the synchronous and asynchronous learning (ASL) method in online learning. In 16 sessions, five meetings were conducted synchronously using the Google Meet application.

Meanwhile, the remaining 11 meetings were conducted asynchronously through the Google Classroom platform. In teaching speaking courses, the lecturer has used multimodality. All aspects of multimodality, such as linguistic design, visual design, auditory design, gestural design, and spatial design, were used in the speaking class. However, because this article is part of dissertation research, on this occasion, the authors focused on the visual design aspect or visual mode used by the lecturer in the speaking class. The activity of speaking class during the 16 meetings is described below:

The first meeting was conducted asynchronously using Google Classroom. The lecturer distributed RPS (semester lesson plan) to students and asked students to read the lesson plan. Communication between lecturer and students was done in writing via Google Classroom. The second meeting also applied asynchronous learning. In addition to synchronous and asynchronous learning (ASL), the lecturer used project-based learning methods. At this second meeting, the lecturer distributed teaching materials in the form of power points about "understanding the concept of Project-based learning". The lecturer used the visual design on the PowerPoint. Then, the lecturer gave students an assignment to make videos or voice notes describing the differences between pictures

that the lecturer shared in a google classroom.

For the third meeting, the lecturer gave new material about "how to be an MC". The lecturer distributed material about how to be an MC in the form of a pdf. Then, students were asked to listen to 2 videos uploaded on Google Classroom. The video contains the right way to introduce a guest star as a host from a native speaker. Furthermore, the lecturer also shared two more videos about tips and examples of becoming a Master of ceremonies. Then, the lecturer gave students the task of making video recordings of what they had learned from their videos. Student video assignments were uploaded on youtube. Then, students were asked to send a youtube link to the lecturer.

At the fourth meeting, the lecturer gave an authentic case that students had to do. The meeting was held synchronously using google meet. At the fifth and sixth meetings, the lecturer used power points to explain the material and instructions to students. In this meeting, visual design was used in the PowerPoint appearance displayed by the lecturer. At the seventh meeting, the lecturer asked students to upload their assignments in case 1 and case 2, explained at the previous session. Assignments were uploaded on the google form provided by the lecturer. Students had two weeks to work on the project.

At the eighth meeting, the lecturer gave new material on "How to be a good Speaker (in seminars, symposiums, conferences, etc.) and (Part 1 understanding the concept Project Based Learning)". Materials and instructions containing visual designs were displayed in the form of power points. After the students read the PowerPoint, the lecturer checked the students' understanding by giving a google form. Some questions about public speaking have to be answered by students through a google form that the lecturer has shared. At the 9th meeting, the lecturer gave a speaking project to students.

At the 10th meeting, the lecturer reminded the students about the task. The lecturer said that the next meeting is the due time for students to submit the video (extended time); please make sure that you offer the best video; use your time. Then, at the 11th meeting, a new post-assignment lecturer about student speaking projects. Next, the lecturer gave new material on making a webinar. The material was provided in the form of power points that students could download and study. Students are asked to study in groups to hold a webinar. The lecturer and students met through google meet, and they discussed many things related to maintaining the webinar.

Then at the 12th meeting, the lecturer asked whether they needed to hold a meeting via google meet or not to discuss student assignments. They agreed to hold a meeting via google at the 13th meeting. Then at the 14th meeting, the lecturer posted a new project. Then students were asked to submit assignments via a google form that the lecturer had made. At the 15th meeting, the lecturer distributed further instructions. The lecturer gave guided questions to be discussed by students. Students did the questions via a google form. At the last meeting, the lecturer asked students to submit their final project on the google form provided by the lecturer.

From the activities described above, it can be seen that the visual design was used by the lecturer when delivering material in speaking courses and when giving instructions to the students about the speaking tasks. The lecturer used visual designs through power points, learning videos, and google forms given to students. The material presented is in the form of interactive PowerPoint presentations with pictures. Next, the power points are linked to Google Classroom. Then, the visual design displayed in the PowerPoint presentation, the lecturer uses images, layouts, colours, bold and italics words in the PowerPoint. Consequently, the lecturer makes effective use of these visual elements to build meaning. It is in line with theories which states that images can be used to convey meaning, gather the meaning of the text, and they operate in ways which words cannot, with a sensual immediacy, and an appeal to desire and fantasy (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996; Callow, 2005)

The visual elements used in power points and learning videos follow the words used when speaking. In addition, the visual design represented in multimodality allows the lecturer to communicate meaning as Canning and Wilson (2001) emphasize the importance of visual design, such as images, in helping students organize their logical skills when developing ideas. So that students can understand what is conveyed by the lecturer. Furthermore, visual elements in speaking class can build students' confidence and motivation to take speaking classes and practice speaking English directly through Google Meet and practice speaking on speaking projects given both individually and collaboratively in a group.

**The benefit of visual design as one of multimodality elements for oral communication.**

Based on observations and interviews with the lecturer, information was obtained that visual design plays an essential role in spoken communication. The benefits include:

a. The use of PowerPoint, youtube, and authentic materials such as posters can support speaking learning. It is supported by the previous study that multimodal communication allows students and teachers in the classroom to draw on a diverse range of semiotic modalities, languages, and technologies (Palmeri 2018: 27).

b. Using visual elements of images in presentations assists the lecturer in conveying ideas. As Brown (2007) stated, images or pictures are widely assumed to be effective in helping students in illustrating concepts and remembering information.

c. Using visual elements such as colour in presentations helps the lecturer in communicating ideas attractively. It is in line with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) argument that colour is a semiotic mode because colour has and can be used to convey meaning.

d. By using multiple modes, the lecturer establishes the purpose of the speaking. When the lecturer use image, the colour choices positively impact the purpose of the spoken text.

e. When the lecturer uses video, the length of the clips is appropriate for the spoken text.

Therefore, visual designs enable the lecturer to teach speaking. The lecturer can deliver material appropriately in speaking class; convey the message wisely in synchronous and asynchronous learning (ASL) of speaking class; encourage students' confidence in speaking, and help students construct meaning-making in oral communication. It is in line with Brown (2007) and Elmiana (2019). They stated that visual images play an essential role in the teaching and learning process in supporting the effectiveness of teaching materials and assisting students in illustrating ideas and remembering information.

**CONCLUSION**

Visual design is one of the elements of multimodality, which is very influential on spoken communication. Visual elements help the lecturer to present material for students who learn English as a foreign language. In addition, with the assistance of visual elements, students can easily understand and remember messages conveyed in learning. Then, by looking at visual mode, students also get confidence to speak up English directly and in their speaking project. Thus, it can be concluded that visual design can assist lecturers and students communicate using English in the classroom.

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