WHEN MULTIMODAL LITERACY IS KNOCKING OUR DOOR: BEST PRACTICE DESIGN FOR TEACHING READING AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: For years, teachers are looking for methods or approaches that can help develop students' reading proficiency. Students tend to only read without exposing and understanding the information from the text. Multimodal literacy is an approach that can solve the problem. Those modes are simultaneously help students develop their reading proficiency. The study is a qualitative research with best practice design which explains how multimodal literacy can be used in the class. This research is conducted in one of an elementary schools in Surakarta with 35 participants between 10 – 11 years old. The result shows that the multimodal literacy can be used in class and give great impact on students. Multimodal literacy has several modes which are connected to one another. Each mode is created with purposeful activities which can help students dig deeper into the text. his year is a political year. The elections of district chiefs took a place in almost all Indonesia provinces simultaneously. Tanjungpinang, the capital city of Riau Islands province also held some elections. There were many candidates who participated in the competitions of winning people's votes. They socialized their ideas, visions, and missions by using outdoor media such as banners, billboards, posters, street furniture, and transits. In political communication, the use of specific media describes a particular language. This article is a sociolinguistic study. The writers attempted to examine that the political campaign language used in the outdoor media in Tanjungpinang as a presence of language variety. Persuasive and provocative words, phrases, and sentences were used. Code-mixing and code-switching also indicated the presence of political campaign language as a register.

Keywords: multimodal literacy, elementary school

INTRODUCTION

Technology has changed very rapidly. It also affects the change in digital communication. It provides facilities for reading and speaking to be combined with various and often complex aspects of images, music, sound, graphics, photography, and film. Those aspects can act as tools to communicate. The semiotic approach views literacy as multimodal, where diverse semiotic resources such as language, music, dance, drama, gesture, and etc., are used to produce meanings (Bearne, 2003; Facer, 2002; Jewitt, 2008).

At the same time, educational policy and national testing requirements are not aware of those changes and still depend on the printed book (Walsh, 2010). Our students are digital natives who are very familiar with this change. They prefer to use digital communication in teaching and learning in the classroom. It is easy for them to access and understand it. It also provides them with the different sources which give them more knowledge about certain materials. They not only read it but they can visualize it from the video. Those sources do not have a limitation, unlike printed material. The impact of it is the challenge that teachers face. To what extent digital technologies can be incorporated within classroom literacy programs without

reducing the importance of the rich, imaginative and cultural knowledge that is derived from books.

Multimodal literacy can solve the problem. It has been around for years and teachers have been using it without realizing it. Multimodal literacy contains several modes that connect visual, audio, text, photograph, video, film, etc into one process that can help students understand certain materials deeper. Children will combine each mode of semiotic resources to represent events and relationships in immediate moments and places (Rowe, 2003; Wohlwend, 2007).

Walsh (2010) stated that multimodal literacy is meaning-making process that occurs through the reading, viewing, understanding, responding to and producing and interacting with multimedia and digital texts. It can include oral and gestural modes of talking, listening and dramatizing as well as writing, designing and producing such texts. The image, words, sound, and movement within texts are modes. Processing these modes can occur simultaneously and is often cohesive and synchronous. Sometimes some certain modes can dominate others. For example, when processing screen-based texts the visual mode can be dominant whereas the mode of sound may be dominant in podcasts.

METHOD

According to Roskos and Neuman (2014), best practice is generally used to describe those instructional approaches and techniques that improve children's reading development. In other words, it has been proven over time that if it is used with fidelity, children are likely to become proficient in reading.

The research is conducted in one of public schools in Indonesia. There are more than 35 students in each classroom. The students have learned English for 5 years but their ability is still average. In this school, the English lesson is included in extracurricular activities to support the full-day school. The students do not get any English lesson because of the policy which stated that English cannot be taught in elementary school. But the school wants the students to have great ability in English. It is a bit hard to do so because the time is not enough and the sources are very limited. The students' printed book comes very late so the teaching-learning process depends on the materials that the teacher gives.

This research used interview, field note, and direct observation. According to Burns (1999: 117), interviews and discussions are faces to face personal interactions, which generate data about the research issue and allow specific to be discussed from other people perspective. Notes or field notes are description and account of events in the research context which are written in relatively factual and objective style (Burns 1999: 87). Direct observation is needed because it gives the researcher chances to obtain actual firsthand information regarding subjects. Direct observation can give the researcher the opportunity to collect data in a real-life situation (Tomal 2003: 43).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There are 35 students in the classroom. The students have learned English for more than 4 years. Most of them have learned English since kindergarten, so they are familiar with some of the aspects of English. They understand and can use words in written and spoken sentence. They also can communicate well though it is not in the upper level they still understand what we are talking about. But it is very rare for them to use the English language outside the class.

When teaching the students, the teacher realized that the students read a text only on the surface. They read the text to answer the question based on the text. As long as they can answer it they did not read the text further and deeper. Some of the texts have foreign words and too wordy so that the students did not have any motivation to even read the text. Elementary school students need simple but interesting text. It is still hard for them to read wordy texts that are more than one page. Even one page without any picture is still difficult for them. The teacher had to find a way to make them interested and enjoy the reading process.

Before doing the reading process, the teacher has to introduce the topic to the students by giving vocabulary that they would use. The teacher has to do brainstorming activity with several pictures to help students memorize. The teacher also gave grammar lesson which can help the students understand why those texts are arranged in a certain way. The topic of the lesson was placed. It mostly used simple present tense because the topic is about the description of places. In the beginning, the teacher used a video about a place. The teacher let them watch the video to attract their interest. The teacher did not give the wordy text which can make the students have lower motivation. At the end of the video, the teacher asked several questions about the video. The usage of video in the classroom is very useful because the student can visualize the content and give students the motivation to join the process (Willmot, 2012). Then they give students the text that has the same topic as the video. Because the text also uses several words from the video, it is easier for the students to understand the text. From the text, teacher asked several questions, the questions were from the text and some others were common questions.

Then the teacher prepared several envelopes that had been decorated with bubbles or sticky notes which contained the keyword from the text which is placed inside. The texts were the description of the certain places around the world and each envelope was different from the other but with the same level of difficulty. The text was also had several pictures to describe a certain part of the text so that the students could understand it easier. Then those envelopes were stuck around the classroom but it also can be stuck on the whiteboard. Students then went around the classroom and chose one of the envelopes. They can imagine what the text was about from the keywords which were stuck on the envelope.

There were 7 envelopes around the classroom so that each envelope could be chosen by 5 students. After choosing it, the students sat on their own group then read the text. The teacher went around the classroom to help students when they found some difficulty. Students also used a dictionary and then write the meaning of the words that they did not understand. Teacher prepared several common questions which could be used to the entire group and several specific questions. For example, who will like to read those texts? Is the text easy to understand? Why? Will you recommend this text to your friend? Why? etc. The students must answer the question and explain the reason for it. The students worked in a group to solve those problems.

Then students would do the presentation in front of the class. They have to explain what the text was about, the content of the text, etc. The teacher gave them freedom when they do the presentation. They could use power point or other application and picture or anything that they like. The students were allowed to give questions to the group.

This multimodal literacy is not only about reading skill but also about the other 3 skills. Each of the activities was designed based on students' needs. The reason why the last activity was presentation was that the teacher wanted to give the students the opportunity to speak up. It was very rare for the students to have the opportunity to speak. After the presentation, the

teacher can give a question about the texts. It gives teacher knowledge regarding how far the students have understood the texts and whether they really pay attention to their friends' presentation.

When doing this in the classroom, the students can be very talkative and sometimes it will disturb other classes. But it is common for the students to do that. When they talk it means that they are learning something. And it will be very difficult to ask them to be quiet because we are dealing with elementary school students who have very powerful energy and cannot keep quiet for some period of time. Also, when doing the presentation not all of the students will give their attention to the presenter. Some of them will be busy with themselves or with their friends. To reduce this, the teacher can ask each group to give the question to the presenter so that they must pay attention to the presenter.

Traditional literacy to multimodal literacy

Our students who are digital natives and millennial generation are very familiar with technology around us. They are smarter than us in this field. Because of that, it will be more suitable if we bring technology to the classroom. We as a teacher should change the way we teach and material or tool that we use in the classroom. We should present text in various ways such as books, cartoons, websites, video games, etc (Sewell & Denton, 2011). Using technology that they are familiar can allure them to join and focus to the lesson.

Multimodal literacy gives positive effect to the students

Students can really enjoy the process of reading class. This process is not like what they normally think regarding the reading activity: reading wordy and long text then answer questions. Using multimodal literacy, they are not only doing the exercise but they have to understand the texts and the purpose of the text. They have to swim deeper. Kress (2005) share that it is very important to interpret multimodal elements in texts to understand language. Literacy is a sophisticated process. It involves building our prior knowledge, culture, and experiences to unfold deeper meanings.

CONCLUSIONS

Multimodal literacy is very useful for the students and the teacher. It brings technology and knowledge to the classroom. It gives the students a chance to see what happens outside their classroom. Multimodal literacy gives students a chance to focus not only on one skill (reading) but also on the other three skills (writing, listening, and speaking). Each mode has its own purpose and represents each skill though they use reading most of it. Multimodal literacy can attract students' interest very well. Students have many inputs for their knowledge and they do not solely depend on the printed book. Then they will be able to look for other material by themselves.

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