

## IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTIMODAL APPROACH FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AMONG TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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The concept of multimodality and how it affects language teaching are reviewed. The importance of development of students' multimodal communicative competence is highlighted. The six modes of communication and their implementation are illustrated. Practical application of multimodal approaches in foreign teaching is presented.

**Keywords:** multimodality; multimodal literacy; multimodal communicative competence; multimodal approach; modes of communication.

## РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ МУЛЬТИМОДАЛЬНОГО ПОДХОДА ДЛЯ РАЗВИТИЯ ИНОЯЗЫЧНОЙ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ СТУДЕНТОВ ТЕХНИЧЕСКОГО ВУЗА

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Рассматривается концепция мультимодальности и её влияние на преподавание иностранного языка. Подчёркивается важность развития мультимодальной коммуникативной компетенции студентов. Проиллюстрированы шесть модусов коммуникации и их применение. Представлено практическое применение мультимодальных подходов в преподавании иностранного языка в техническом вузе.

**Ключевые слова:** мультимодальность; мультимодальная грамотность; мультимодальная коммуникативная компетентность; модусы коммуникации; мультимодальный подход.

Modern communication has become increasingly digital and multimodal due to the rapid growth of digital technologies and the ways information is processed and exchanged nowadays. Teaching foreign language competence has undergone significant changes and has become multimodal as well.

Multimodality refers to a communicative situation where more than one form (mode) of communication are used simultaneously to create the meaning [1, p. 35]. Unlike traditional communication that relies purely on written or spoken words, multimodal communication includes multiple channels to convey the meaning. This implies that texts that we encounter today combine a mix of words, visuals, sounds, gestures, textures, etc. Embracing multimodality has become an important aspect in foreign language teaching. As a result, teachers go beyond words and incorporate images, sounds, space, textures, visuals in the teaching process. By adopting multimodal approach, teachers can make the process of language learning more diverse, interactive and productive as it enables to address students' different learning styles, enhance their engagement, makes the process of learning more comprehensive, exciting and interesting. Overall, multimodality is reshaping the process of foreign language teaching by employing different modes of communication in a classroom.

Besides understanding the role of multimodality in language teaching, many teachers have recognised the importance of developing students' multimodal literacy. It refers to an ability to interpret and produce texts that integrate different modes of communication. In other words, multimodal literacy is a skill that allows student to comprehend multimodal texts as well as create their own ones using a combination of different modes. Developing students' multimodal competence has become critical in language teaching as it develops students' literacy beyond just how they can speak or write in a foreign language [2, p. 5]. Now, however, multimodal communicative competence extends to understanding how images, numbers, sounds, signs, words can work together to create the meaning more efficiently. Therefore, teachers should introduce multimodal texts in the teaching process to give students the opportunity to develop this critical skill and help them navigate in a multimodal world. It also teaches students to communicate more productively in a digital world.

Multimodal approach is aligned with the VARK framework, developed by Neil Fleming, who classifies learning preferences into four categories. Visual learners rely on diagrams, charts, colour coding, flow maps, and similar visual aids. Aural learners grasp information best through sound which includes discussions, group work, recorded lectures, audiobooks, and podcasts. They often enjoy explaining and debating ideas, or even using humour in learning. Reading/Writing learners prefer text-based activities such as taking notes, reading textbooks, writing essays, highlighting and underlining key points. Kinesthetic learners learn through experience which may involve lab work, field trips, role-play, case studies, trial-and-error, and using examples to solve problems.

From a multimodal perspective, there are six modes of communication. They are linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, spatial, and tactile. Each mode has unique characteristics, serves different functions and conveys the meaning

differently. It is important to understand how these modes can work together to convey the message effectively.

Linguistic mode is a cornerstone in language teaching as it relies on language itself when students speak, write, listen or read. To use it efficiently, teachers should provide tasks that link language itself whether its spoken or written words with other modes of communication. Examples are storytelling, reading a text aloud, writing captions for an image, dialogues.

Visual mode implies using images whether static or moving as well as elements of visual design. To engage it effectively, teachers can design activities that link words to different elements of visual mode such as charts, maps, photos, diagrams, infographics, flashcards. Examples can include watching and then discussing diagrams, images, signs, videos. Visual aids help to make information clearer and more comprehensive.

Aural mode deals with sounds. By introducing exercises where different elements of it (noises, music, silence, volume, pitch, rhythm) are included, students can learn how to effect meaning by adding nuance, mood, or emphasis. Examples can entail dialogues, audio recordings, watching movies.

Gestural mode communicates meaning through movement and body language. This mode is underestimated in foreign language teaching but it plays a crucial role in face-to-face communication. Teachers can leverage this mode by including the elements of this mode into exercises. Examples can incorporate role-play and drama activities, where students are encouraged to use body language, facial expressions, and gestures to deliver meaning effectively. Gestural mode makes learning more dynamic and productive.

Spatial mode refers to the arrangement physical elements to communicate information. Examples can include putting students in a specific group configuration (rows, circles) or arrangement of teaching materials on a screen, page, board. Teachers can encourage students to practise this mode by introducing activities where students are asked to create their own texts, mind maps, posters with consideration how to organise these documents to convey the meaning effectively. Tactile mode relates to touch and physical interaction, whether through paper, pens, or digital touchscreens. Examples are model-building, real objects, hand-made exercises. Now let's look at how six communication modes were realised in our new manual for first-year students «Practical English Course for Information Technology» [3, p. 3]. The linguistic mode is widely implemented in the textbook. In such tasks students are asked to describe, for example, the operation of a typical computer network based on a diagram with the specified components, or how a given computer network works based on diagrams and key expressions. Students can be asked to fill in a concept map reflecting the main content of the lesson, or using the definition of an accompanying term and phrase as prompted, provide a definition of the main concept.

The visual mode with its focus on the meaning of what can be seen can be found in the manual where the information is presented using maps and colour

coding, or when concepts are revealed through images or diagrams of all their components, or statistics are clearly presented in the form of bar charts.

The auditory mode involving the use of sounds is realised through a video fragment as a short documentary with music, while watching it, students are asked to reflect on their emotions provoked by the episode and highlight what they find most shocking, then there is a discussion of what techniques (such as music, sounds etc.) are used to reflect the full picture, or it can be a short game episode, where one of the methods of social engineering is illustrated using various audio means.

The gestural mode conveying meaning through non-verbal communication is exploited in various role-plays in the textbook where students can act as an employee of an IT department of a company trying to offer the best options to the clients, a technician of a tech support office dealing with clients' IT problems or a security specialist dealing with urgent digital threats.

The spatial mode of communication is illustrated in the manual in various forms of text arrangements. The arrangement of the text information in the tasks in columns, tables, bubbles, flowcharts etc. helps to convey the meaning in a more efficient way.

The realisation of the tactile mode that assumes some physical contact for presenting information and conveying the meaning can be found at the end of each lesson of the topic in the following two sections: "Conclusion Worksheet" where students are offered to perform mini-projects, the completion of which involves demonstrating the students' developed linguistic and professional competencies; and "Web Search", which contains links to Internet sources, the study of which allows students to develop the skills of skimming and intensive reading, promotes the development of independent search activities, critical thinking, and the construction of their own in-depth knowledge.

By incorporating multimodality into language teaching, teachers let students approach the target language in diverse forms, making their understanding visible, and fostering a more dynamic, inclusive learning environment.

Despite the fact that digital technologies open powerful opportunities, their introduction into education raises also concerns and requires comprehensive analysis of both positive and negative aspects. Rapid and unplanned digitalisation can lead to a number of destructive consequences such as displacing skilled teachers who lack digital literacy, overwhelming learners with excessive information, fostering cognitive strain, weakening face-to-face communication skills, and even impacting students' health.

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