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Multimodal Communication Strategy in Language Teaching for Generation Z

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A B S T R A C T

The development of digital technology demands a change in communication strategies in language teaching, especially for Generation Z who have a preference for visual and interactive approaches. This study aims to describe the multimodal communication strategies applied in language learning, their effectiveness, and the challenges faced. The method used is Systematic Literature Review with an analysis of relevant studies based on open access over the past ten years. The findings of this study show that multimodal communication increases student engagement and understanding, but has not been widely optimized by educators. This research emphasizes the urgency of multimodal integration in language teaching and the need for teacher training and digital-based curriculum development to answer the needs of the digital-native generation. In addition, this research makes a theoretical and practical contribution to the reform of language education today.

Keywords: *Multimodal Communication, Language Teaching, Generation Z*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has created a major transformation in the practice of communication in the classroom, especially in language teaching. Generation Z as digital natives grew up in a highly visual, interactive, and connected environment with various digital media platforms. However, many teachers still apply a conventional approach that emphasizes one-way verbal communication, even though today's students are more responsive to multimodal learning formats (Zeng, 2023). This inequality leads to low student involvement in the learning process, as well as a weak mastery of essential language communication competencies in the 21st century (Nadia, 2023). This reality is an indication that the language teaching system must adapt to the expectations of a generation that is used to the diversity of information modes such as text, visual, sound, and video.

The study of multimodal theory pioneered by Kress and van Leeuwen emphasized the importance of using different modes of communication in the construction of meaning, but in practice, many teachers have not implemented these strategies effectively in the context of language learning (Hartle, Facchinetti, & Franceschi, 2021). In fact, a multimodal approach can improve students' linguistic understanding and cognitive participation through the simultaneous integration of text, images, sounds, and gestures (Shamim & Riaz, 2023). Previous research has focused on multimodality as an object of semiotic study, but has not examined in depth the practical strategies for its use by teachers in language learning for Generation Z. This shows that there is a gap in the literature between multimodality theory and its implementation in contemporary pedagogical practice.

This study aims to describe the multimodal communication strategies that have been applied in language learning for Generation Z, examine the effectiveness of its application on student engagement, and identify the challenges faced in the process based on a review of the

scientific literature. Through this approach, it is hoped that relevant and effective strategy patterns can be found in the context of digital age language classrooms, as well as open up opportunities for the development of more adaptive and interactive instructional designs.

The urgency of this research is based on the fact that the mismatch between Generation Z's learning preferences and traditional teaching approaches has posed serious obstacles in the effectiveness of language teaching (Xu, 2024). The research objectives that highlight the strategies and challenges of implementing multimodal communication play an important role in providing concrete solutions to these barriers. By referring to the multimodality theory, this study reinforces the importance of recontextualizing the role of teachers as facilitators of digital media-based learning that is well integrated into the language curriculum (Kalmatova, 2024). Therefore, this research is expected to be a scientific contribution that bridges theory and practice in an effort to reform language teaching that is inclusive and relevant to the current generation.

Literature Review

Multimodal communication is defined as the practice of communication that integrates various semiotic modes such as verbal, visual, gestural, and auditory language in a single message to convey meaning in a richer and contextual way (Rowsell & Collier, 2016). Kress and van Leeuwen as pioneers of multimodal theory emphasize that meaning is not formed only through written texts, but also through combinations of other modes of communication used simultaneously in a given social context (Faigley, Kress, & van Leeuwen, 2002). In the context of education, the multimodal approach allows teachers to deliver learning materials in a more engaging and adaptive way to the needs of students' diverse learning styles (Magnusson & Godhe, 2019).

The manifestation of multimodal communication in educational practice includes the incorporation of text, image, video, audio, gesture, and digital interactive elements integrated in a single learning process (Bateman & Schmidt-Borcherding, 2018). In language learning, this approach is often applied through media such as audiovisual presentations, visual project-based assignments, as well as the use of interactive digital platforms that allow students to produce and understand meaning through various modes simultaneously (Haquin, 2011). Research also shows that the use of multimodal communication can significantly improve students' content understanding, memory, and learning motivation (Al-Muttairi & Al-Alusi, 2025).

If examined in educational practice, language teaching is a systematic process that focuses on developing students' ability to understand, use, and reflect on language in various communication contexts, both oral and written (Souzandehfar & Soozandehfar, 2020). In the framework of contemporary education, language teaching does not only focus on grammar or linguistic structure, but also includes multimodal literacy and socio-cultural competence as part of meaningful learning (Qian, 2024). Thus, language teaching is no longer linear or text-based, but also involves the development of critical skills in understanding symbols, visualizations, and complex multimodal narratives.

The implementation of effective language teaching in the digital age is characterized by the use of collaborative, integrative, and technology-based approaches that allow for multimodal exploration of meaning (Breuer & Archer, 2016). The strategy includes practices such as the integration of videos and infographics in vocabulary learning, the use of interactive applications for task-based learning, as well as the exploration of multimodal texts in writing and speaking activities (Al-Muttairi & Al-Alusi, 2025). This approach has been shown to improve students' emotional engagement, linguistic comprehension, and critical thinking skills.

In educational practice, the manifestation of Generation Z characteristics is reflected in their tendency to respond positively to digital technology-based learning, the use of short videos, infographics, and other interactive media that are integrated into a single learning platform (Liruso, Cad, & Ojeda, 2019). They show a preference for learning experiences that are personalized, instant, and can be tailored to individual needs (Magnusson & Godhe, 2019).

Multimodal Communication Strategy in Language Teaching for Generation Z

Therefore, teachers and educational institutions need to adopt an approach that suits the learning style of this generation through the integration of technology and a multimodal-based pedagogical approach.

Generation Z refers to a group of individuals born in the mid-1990s to early 2010s, who have been familiar with digital technology and internet-based communication environments since childhood (Shamim & Riaz, 2023). They tend to have a high preference for visualization, interactivity, and speed of access to information, as well as show multitasking skills and dependence on digital devices in carrying out daily activities (Kalmatova, 2024). In the context of education, this characteristic makes Generation Z a group that requires a media-based, visual, and multimodal teaching approach to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

METHOD

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach as a type of research, which aims to compile a scientific synthesis of relevant literature in a structured and transparent manner (Kewalramani et al., 2024). The primary data in this study was obtained from scientific articles that directly examined the implementation of multimodal communication in language learning, especially for Generation Z. The secondary data consisted of theories, models, and conceptual approaches related to multimodality, language teaching, and characteristics of the digital generation spread across scientific journals, reference books, and conference proceedings. Literature searches are conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest databases with restrictions on open, relevant, and published access articles in the last 10 years (2015-2025). The data collection technique was carried out to find literature that was in accordance with the research objectives. All articles that meet the criteria will be analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. The following is the order of literature search in table 1.

Database	Syntax	Number of Articles
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("multimodal communication" AND "language teaching" AND "Generation Z") AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND PUBYEAR > 2015	78
Web of Science (WOS)	TOPIC: ("multimodal communication" AND "language learning" AND "Generation Z") AND DOCUMENT TYPES: (Article) AND PUBLICATION YEARS: (2015–2025)	54
ProQuest	("multimodal communication" OR "multimodal strategy") AND ("language instruction" OR "language teaching") AND ("Generation Z") AND publicationDate:2015-2025 AND sourceType: Scholarly Journals	30

The literature review process uses the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The data selection process is carried out systematically which consists of several main stages. The first stage is to formulate specific research questions focused on multimodal communication strategies in language teaching for Generation Z. The next stage is to develop a literature search protocol that includes keywords, search strategies, and inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The guidelines for searching literature started from the *identification* process, there were 162 scientific articles found in the database using the keywords "multimodal communication", "language teaching", and "Generation Z". Furthermore, a *screening* process was carried out through initial screening by deleting 31 duplicate articles, leaving 131 articles. The next process is *eligibility*, which is screening based on thematic relevance to the research focus and year of publication (2015–2025) as many as 88 articles, while 332 articles were eliminated because they were not in accordance with the research objectives. After going through the final selection process based on the quality of the methodology, open access, and contribution to the study, 78 articles were obtained that were included in *inclusion* and used as the main source in the synthesis of this research data. The flow of the literature review according to the

guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) can be shown in Figure 1 below.
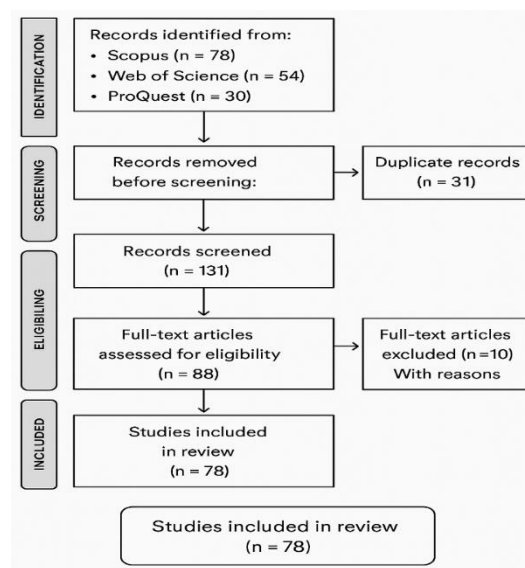

Figure 1: Literature Selection Protocol

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The findings in this study are described using a thematic synthesis approach. The description of the findings is arranged in the order of the research objectives. The following is a description of the research findings.

Multimodal Implementation Strategy in Language Teaching for Generation Z

The use of digital and social media has become an integral part of multimodal-based language teaching strategies for Generation Z. Studies by Shamim & Riaz (2023) show that Generation Z students consciously choose different apps and platforms to communicate according to the context, demonstrating a deep understanding of the affordance of each mode (Shamim & Riaz, 2023). An effective strategy involves the integration of visual, text, audio, and interactivity media. This approach creates a rich translanguaging space, which allows students to blend first and second languages in the production of digital meanings (Wang, 2024). With the support of social-semiotic theory, this strategy not only presents content, but also stimulates students' active interpretation of meaning.

Game- and interaction-based multimodal learning strategies are the top preferences of Generation Z students. Edutainment approaches, as described by Chumak & Andrienko (2020), offer activities such as classroom blogs, videos, and interactive quizzes that stimulate student engagement (Chumak & Andrienko, 2020). Generation Z students are also more responsive to strategies that support task-based and collaborative learning. They want space to express themselves creatively, including the use of social media, short videos, and animations. This encourages educators to utilize apps like Kahoot, Instagram, and YouTube as part of learning design.

The integration of hands-on hands-on hands-on learning approaches is also a strategy that Generation Z is very fond of. Study by Lai et al. (2024) shows that multimodal tasks such as making dumplings, poster presentations, and collaborative experiments improve students' verbal communication and cultural understanding (Lai, 2024). Students experience improved vocabulary, pronunciation accuracy, and speaking fluency after the implementation of the multimodal strategy of direct assignments. In addition, students' reflections show that they are more motivated and feel like they have a richer learning experience.

Multimodal strategy models such as VARK Whistle allow teachers to accommodate diverse learning styles in a single lesson plan. According to Nurwulansari (2019), this model creates learning activities that integrate visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic (Nurwulansari, 2019). It provides a space for students to explore communication in a fun and

challenging setting. Learning becomes collaborative and students are able to express themselves effectively.

The Effectiveness of Multimodal Use in Language Teaching for Generation Z

The effectiveness of the multimodal approach is demonstrated by the improvement of students' vocabulary and speaking skills. Nadia (2023) found that strategies such as pictures, interactive games, and presentations help students overcome language barriers and improve vocabulary mastery (Nadia, 2023). Students feel more confident when actively using English in a supportive learning context. This reflects the potential of a multimodal approach in strengthening basic language skills in a practical way.

In the context of oral learning, Zeng (2023) emphasized that a multimodal approach is effective in improving students' oral communication skills (Zeng, 2023). Visual and audio engagement helps students understand the cultural context and deeper meaning. Through dialogue activities, video presentations, and the use of online platforms, students are able to adapt the use of language to authentic communication situations. This shows that multimodality is not just an aid, but a key framework in effective language teaching.

Research by Xu (2024) confirms that multimodal teaching combined with information technology significantly improves language learning outcomes. The integration of technology allows teachers to present diverse and interactive materials, increasing motivation to learn (Xu, 2024). Students not only understand the material better, but also demonstrate stronger cross-cultural communication skills. This is relevant in the context of the globalization of education.

Multimodality in digital assignments, such as video projects or classroom blogs, has proven to be effective in building translanguaging spaces for even novice students. Wang (2024) shows that even students new to language learning are able to show high achievement through multimodal digital composition (Wang, 2024). This opens up new opportunities in assessment design and assignments that are not only text-based. Multimodal-based evaluations encourage creativity and authentic use of language.

The Challenges of Multimodal Implementation in Language Teaching for Generation Z

Although there is an effectiveness of multimodal implementation in language teaching for generation Z, it has challenges in the form of limited resources and teacher training. Xu (2024) notes that many teachers are not familiar with the use of technology in a multimodal approach, leading to a lack of optimal implementation of this strategy (Xu, 2024). Teachers need continuous training to be able to utilize multimodality effectively and not only as a complement to teaching materials.

Another challenge is the cognitive load that arises from too many modes of communication at once. Fitri & Gunawan's (2025) research shows that although multimodality helps understanding, if it is not well designed, students feel overwhelmed (Fitri & Gunawan, 2025). This signifies the importance of a balanced learning design between visual, audio, and text modes. The curriculum needs to consider the processing capacity of students when designing multimodal assignments.

In addition, the wrong perception from teachers who think that digital-native students are automatically proficient in multimodality is also an obstacle. Lohani (2019) criticized the assumption that students are able to evaluate information simply because they are familiar with technology (Lohani, 2019). Teachers need to facilitate multimodal literacy skills explicitly, not just relying on students' intuition. Critical thinking evaluation and training are also an important part of the learning process.

Finally, the traditional grading system that is still predominantly text-based is also a challenge. Assessments have not fully accommodated multimodal products that include videos, infographics, or podcasts. As highlighted by Wang (2024), teachers should design appropriate assessment rubrics for multimodal assignments so that student achievement can be measured fairly. Without a proper evaluation approach, the full potential of multimodality will not be achieved.

Discussion

Systematic results from the literature review show that multimodal communication has been used in language teaching to Generation Z with various strategies such as simultaneous integration of text, images, audio, and video. This strategy is tailored to Gen Z's learning preferences that are highly visual, digital, and interactive. In addition, it was found that this communication strategy had a significant impact on improving students' understanding of language concepts and emotional engagement. However, there are challenges such as low multimodal literacy among teachers and uneven digital pedagogical training, which leads to inequities in effectiveness.

This study reinforces previous findings that multimodal communication is effective in supporting digital learning, especially in the Gen Z population (Shamim & Riaz, 2023); (Mestre-Mestre, 2015). However, the excellence of this study lies in its comprehensive synthesis based on SLR that not only showcases best practices but also highlights critical gaps such as differences in technology mastery between educators. This study goes beyond previous exploratory approaches by offering a structured picture of the effectiveness of multimodal strategies holistically in the context of digital generation.

These findings are an indicator that multimodal communication strategies have great potential in creating contextual, collaborative, and highly engaging language learning for Gen Z. This strategy clearly bridges their visual-auditory way of thinking with complex teaching materials. This reflection confirms that the integration of varied communication modes is not just an addition of technology, but a reconstruction of pedagogical methods to answer the needs of a new and dynamic generation of learning (Hartle et al., 2021).

The implications of this research are particularly significant for curriculum designers, teachers, and professional training developers. Multimodal communication strategies need to be explicitly integrated into the language education curriculum, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels, which are predominantly filled by Gen Z. This knowledge also opens up opportunities for the development of AI-based learning platforms, interactive videos, and augmented reality as a form of multimodal-based teaching innovation to improve learning motivation and academic outcomes (Yang, 2023).

The success of the multimodal approach in teaching language to Gen Z is due to the compatibility between the characteristics of technology and the mindset of the digital-native generation that prioritizes visualization, speed of access, and interactivity. Meanwhile, the failure of this strategy often occurs due to the lack of digital competence of teachers, the uneven availability of Information and Communication Technology infrastructure, and resistance to changes in traditional learning methods that are still dominant in many institutions (Jayaputri & Aziz, 2024).

Based on these results, it is highly recommended that educational institutions develop special training for teachers in the development of multimodal communication competencies. Governments and higher education institutions also need to design integrative policies that require the use of a multimodal approach in language teaching. In addition, there is a need for collaboration between stakeholders to provide an equitable digital infrastructure, as well as support sustainable action research to adapt teaching strategies to technological developments and student characteristics (Sumartono, 2023).

CONCLUSION

It is astonishing that in the midst of the rapid flow of digitalization of education, multimodal communication strategies have not become the main approach in language teaching for Generation Z, who are actually the digital-native generation. The findings of this study show that the simultaneous integration of various communication modes such as visual, audio, gestural, and spatial not only enriches the meaning of learning, but also significantly increases students' emotional engagement and cognitive understanding, where Generation Z learners respond much more positively to interactive and multimodal teaching models than conventional verbal-based methods alone. The fact that many teachers have not

optimized this strategy shows the distance between the learning characteristics of students and the pedagogical approach used, so this study makes an important contribution theoretically by reinforcing the relevance of Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodality theory in 21st century education, as well as practically through a comprehensive synthesis of the Systematic Literature Review approach that offers strategic guidance for educators, curriculum designers, and educational institutions in designing learning experiences that are more contextual and responsive to the needs of the digital generation. Although the results depend on the availability of online literature, this actually opens up space for development through empirical studies such as classroom action research or quasi-experiments at various levels of education, including cross-cultural and linguistic studies and exploration of their long-term impact on students' learning outcomes and digital literacy, so that the direction of further research can strengthen the practical foundation while ensuring the adaptability of the implementation of multimodal communication strategies in holistic learning.

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