

Using multimodal texts to enhance learner engagement during online classes

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The dynamic nature of technology has influenced the field of education and it is evident during the Covid 19 pandemic situation. The multimodal approach on literacy is based on the assumption that meanings are made through many representational and communicational resources which encompass linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and special designs. Therefore, the use of multimodal texts in language classrooms especially the ones based on technology has shed light on the prospect of bringing all the means of meaning-making into effective methods of learning. Thus, a shift in the literacy pedagogy from conventional teaching approaches to contemporary teaching approaches by enabling integration of technology into English as Second Language (ESL) classroom is essential. Therefore, the teachers can incorporate various multimodal texts into their lessons especially in the online class context to motivate their students and enhance learner engagement. Thus, this research study is attempted to identify the effectiveness of incorporation of varied multimodal texts types for different purposes of the lessons to enhance learner engagement in the virtual classroom during the Covid pandemic situation in Sri Lanka which is consisted of two research questions; a) How the use of multimodal text can enhance learners' engagement in the lessons? b) What are the learners' perceptions about the use of varied types of multimodal texts in the virtual ESL classroom? The study was carried out using action research with both quantitative and qualitative instruments for one month time period. The sample was 35 students from grade 10 at H/Thalawa Vidyalaya. All the teaching sessions integrated various multimodal texts that are appropriate for both learners and the lesson objectives. Each lesson was consisted of at least one multimodal text. The lessons were created to teach at least one aspect of four language skills, grammar or vocabulary. The Google classroom, presentations slides, videos, Padlet, Slido, Google forms, chat options (Zoom and WhatsApp) were incorporated into lessons. The quantitative data were gathered through a survey distributed through Google forms. The qualitative data were gathered through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews. Moreover, the observations and reviewing students work were used as the data collection methods to further affirm the findings. The gathered quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). As the learners have responded in their mother tongue before the qualitative data analysis those responses were translated into English without any meaning changing. Later those qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Through this study, it is found that the use of learner-friendly and familiar multimodal text types could enhance learner engagement highly and the learners have a positive attitude towards the use of various multimodal text types for different purposes in the language classroom. The results of the present study will make the teachers aware of the value and effectiveness of using varied multimodal text types in their English classroom especially during the virtual class as a strategy to enhance the learner motivation, interest and engagement with the lesson.

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