

How to Develop Students' Viewing Skill in High School English Teaching with the Multimodal Discourse

Jingwen Li

China West Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, China

Abstract

In the 21st century, humans have officially entered the era of picture reading, and the single language medium is gradually replaced by the complex media composed of language, image and sound. Traditional language signs and non-verbal signs have become indispensable sources of information. The ability to see based on multimodal discourse is particularly important today and in the future. To cultivate students' reading ability based on multimodal discourse is the requirement of Times, the need to help students understand the discourse better, and the necessary condition to promote students' all-round development. In senior high school, when teachers cultivate students' reading ability based on multimodal discourse, it would be better for them to follow the following three stages: first, decode the surface content and obtain key information; Second, carefully read, understand and develop the ability to use information; Third, deep insight to promote students' whole-person development.

Keywords

Multimodal Discourse; Viewing; High School English Teaching.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, we have entered the "picture reading era", so the single language media resource is gradually replaced by the multimodal resources with language, image, sound, etc. The interpretation of social behavior and meaning representation should include all expressive resources such as non-verbal symbols (Feng, 2014). There the multimedia discourses emerge. The understanding of multimedia discourses requires the working of multi-senses such as auditory sense and visual sense. In English teaching, teachers have emphasized listening, speaking, reading and writing for a long time. Now, with the emergence of multimodal discourses, viewing has received considerable attention. NECS (2020) stated that in the new media era, it is necessary to cultivate students' language skills in five aspects, including listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. How to develop high school students' viewing skill with multimodal discourses is a new question in English teaching and learning research.

To develop students' viewing skill with multimodal discourses is promoted by the development of times. With the advent of globalization, English has become a world language. The globalization era requires people to grasp the latest scientific and technological information in time and grasp the trend of modern scientific and technological development. Due to the rapid development of information technology, these documents and information are generally transmitted in the form of multimodal discourses such as printed matter and images. What's more, to develop students' viewing skill with multimodal discourses will help students understand the discourses better. The purpose of using multimodal discourse is that one mode is not enough to express clearly the meaning of the communicator, so another mode is used to strengthen, supplement, adjust and cooperate to express the meaning more fully or as fully as possible, so that the listener can understand the discourse (D.L. Zhang, 2009). The multimodality of a text plays an important role in helping readers better interpret the text from

a new perspective (Kress & Vanleeuwen,1996). Therefore, if a reader only understands the meaning of the linguistic part of a multimodal discourse and does not understand the meaning of other modes, he or she will not be able to fully and completely understand the whole meaning of the discourse. In the last, it will greatly improve students' interest in English learning. Traditional English teaching emphasizes the structure of language, which is mechanical and boring. Multimodal discourses can enrich reading teaching content, teaching forms and teaching methods through a variety of modes or symbol systems, effectively attract students' attention, and enable students to actively participate in classroom teaching and directly stimulate students' interest in English.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is Multimodal Discourse?

The words 'mode', 'medium' and 'modality' often appear. There is a certain connection between each other in meaning, but the boundary is not very clear and easy to cause confusion and misunderstanding. Therefore, it is necessary to explain their respective meanings. Generally, mode refers to channel of communication, such as spoken mode, written mode and electronic mode. Medium refers to the technology used to facilitate communication, such as computer and telephone. Modal refers to the channels and medium of communication including language, technology, image, color, music and other symbolic systems.

The main theoretical basis of multimodal discourse is systematic functional linguistics by Halliday (1978). Since multimodal discourse analysis is deeply rooted in systemic functional linguistics, so it can be called as systemic functional semiotics (Zhu, 2007). When people interact, sometimes they are present and can communicate directly. Sometimes they interact through information tools, that is, they can use multiple channels and modes to exchange information and handle various relationships. This is the construction and transmission of meaning. It's not single modal, but multimodal. For example, every person has a variety of experiences every day: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. Our experience of the world comes from a wide variety of sources, and our senses converge (Williamson, 2003). Zhang (2009) made detailed explanation about media in multimedia systems. They are verbal media and non-verbal media. What's more, he believed that there were different kinds of relationships between different modes of media, such as complementary and non-complementary.

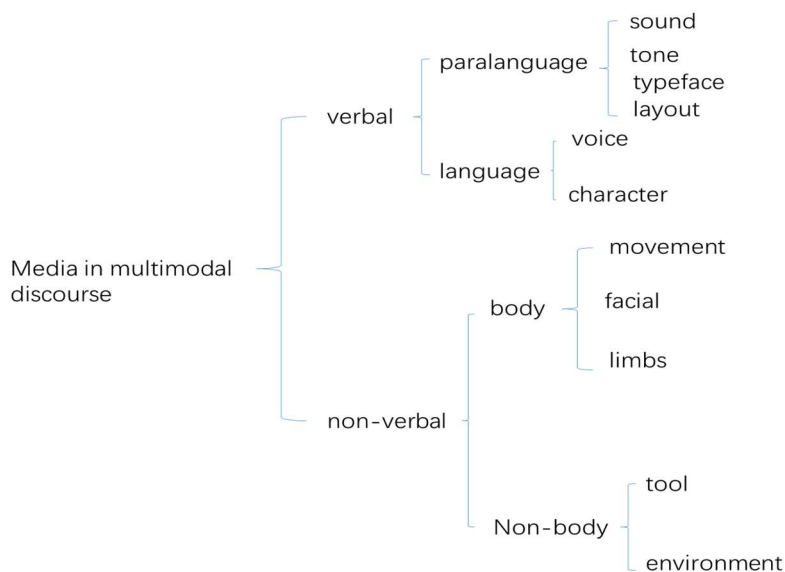


Figure 1. Media in multimodal discourse (Zhang Delu, 2009).

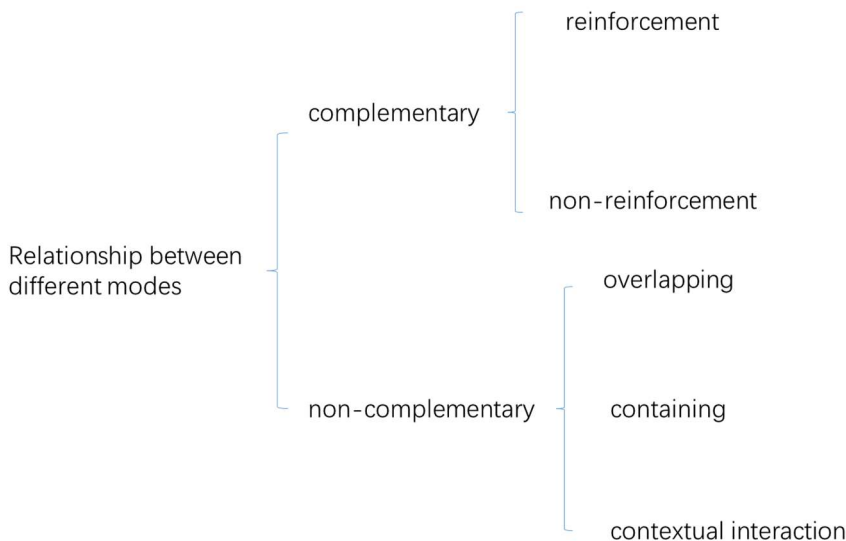


Figure 2. Relationship between different modes (D.L. Zhang, 2009).

2.2. What is Viewing?

Viewing refers to the skill of understanding meaning by making use of graphics, tables, animations, symbols and videos in multimodal text (NECS, 2020). From this statement, we can see that the ability to "see" mainly refers to the ability to understand non-text visual symbols such as images and videos (Wu, H.P.&Li, L. , 2021). In the 1960s and 1970s, J. Debes pioneered the concept of "visual literacy," which refers to our ability to understand, create, and communicate visual images. That is, the ability to read, interpret, make and cross the flow with the graph. Another theoretical source of "look" is multimodal communication theory. The multimodal communication theory breaks through the limitation of the traditional language-centered single modal analysis method, and its core idea is that human communication is the interaction and complementarity of the meaning constructed by multiple modes. The cultivation of viewing skill is beneficial. It will be conducive to the cognitive development of learners and promotes learning, stimulate and strengthen other basic literacy skills, so that students' competencies can be fully developed (Q.W. Zhang,2002). Based on the classification of human thinking in psychology, human thinking must go through three stages: intuitive action thinking → concrete image thinking → abstract logical thinking. Fang and Chen (2019) concluded that there are at least three teaching levels of viewing skill.

Table 1. Teaching levels of viewing skill (Fang Han and Chen Yu, 2019)

Teaching level	Stage of human thinking development
Decode surface information	Intuitive action thinking
Understand middle-level connotation	Concrete image thinking
Enlighten deep introspection debate	Abstract logical thinking

3. How to Develop Students' Viewing Skill in High School English Teaching with the Multimodal Discourse?

3.1. Viewing Surface Information--Get Information

In traditional teaching materials, there are a large number of continuous texts with clear hierarchy, rich aesthetic meaning and complete knowledge reference, and non-continuous texts such as images, tables, information Outlines, advertisements, maps, instructions and other forms. The ultimate goal of information presented in multimodal discourses is to extract effective and key information, and develop students' ability to decode information, especially

the ability to find information and integrate information fragments. Take multimodal discourse--Food comments as an example. It's from Foreign language and research press, high school English, compulsory 2, unit one--Food for thought.

Food comments

Read and match the comments to the pictures.

1 **Backyard BBQ, Kansas City, US**
 ★★★★★
 The most tender steak I've ever had! The barbecue gives it that famous smoky flavour, and it comes with a shiny sauce that's very, very spicy!

2 **Bund 59, Shanghai, China**
 ★★★★★
 A bowl of soup with a large, round meatball! The meatball is cooked through, which looked slightly pink inside. Incredibly soft and juicy – it melts in the mouth!

3 **Antonio's Pizzeria, London, UK**
 ★★☆☆☆
 Worst pizza ever! I ordered a large vegetarian pizza, but it was tiny! It was served cold and came with some sort of sticky sauce which tasted bitter and smelt really fishy!

4 **Madame Laurent's Bakery, Paris, France**
 ★★★★★
 You've got to try the strawberry cheesecake. It's smooth and creamy with fresh strawberries, which give it a lovely sweet and fruity taste. Highly recommended!

Underline the words that describe food in Activity 4 and put them into the table.
 Add any more you can think of.

Appearance	Smell	Taste	Feel

Figure 3. Food comments.

It is a typical discontinuous text and multimodal discourse, requiring students to complete the tabular information after reading the text. This multimodal text uses a few words and a few pictures to convey a lot of information, such as appearance, smell, taste and feel. It's easy for students to get key information.

3.2. Carefully Viewing--Develop the Ability of Using Information

The following one is a typical discontinuous text. It is from foreign language teaching and research, high school English compulsory 2, Unit 6 Earth first. This theme is man and nature, which guides students to realize the harmony between man and nature. The multimodal discourse is about the factors resulting to global warming. Students should view them carefully and then share what they know about these phenomenon, such as the harm and suggestions on how to deal with them. The whole process need students' careful viewing and their own knowledge.

Dealing with global warming

Share what you know about these expressions.

Figure 4. Dealing with global warming

3.3. Deep Viewing--Promoting Comprehensive Development

Some multimodal discourses are different from those of discontinuous texts such as advertisements, street signs, timetables, maps and instructions, etc. Students can deeply study these materials, fully tap their value, and promote the cultivation of core literacy and whole-person development. Taking the following multimodal discourse as an example. It's form foreign language teaching and research press, high school English, compulsory 3, Unit 1. The

theme of this unit is man and society. It aims to guide students to know how to maintain a good relationship with others. The following multimodal discourse describes different kinds of people. students should view people's actions and feelings etc. to describe what each person is doing and talk about what kind of person they might be.



Figure 5. Knowing me, knowing you

The whole process will not only develop students' language ability, but also promote their thinking ability. Therefore, multimodal discourse is beneficial for students' comprehensive development.

4. Summary

Developing viewing skill with multimodal discourses has great benefits. It will guide students to get the key information and deep think, and then students will develop comprehensively. In practical teaching, teachers should follow three stages: viewing surface information, carefully viewing and deep viewing.

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