



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Multimodal Perspective in Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics: Recent Trends, Issues, and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

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This study shaped the structure of old Muslim historians' points of view, discussed the strong ages of the past, and ineffective Mughal interest, developed the responses of Muslim historiography in British India, as well as illustrated Muslim capabilities by diverse eminent historians. It sheds light on different historical writings of scholars and to aware them about the significance of language as an identity. Apart from this time, among different historians and scholars like Sir Syed, Moulana Shibli, Ameer Ali, Chirag Ali and Altaf Hussain Hali discussed Muslim historiography with different facets, while Zakaullah performed an important role because he had a great influence on students, finding solutions to the Western challenging obstacle and teaching them how to obtain knowledge with proper understanding. He delves the motives for modification and adjustment of curriculum language. His philosophical aspects of writing profoundly influenced their newish learning methods. No doubt he was the first historian to compile the History of India in Urdu from ancient to modern times and became a center of attention among others. Unfortunately faced criticism for favouring the British trends, but their devotee always followed him after his death.

INTRODUCTION

Language learning has always changed. Textbooks and spoken drills are no longer how learners depend on. They are now watching videos, using mobile apps, interacting with AI and authoring of digital stories. The nature of these shifts are phenomenal because it brings the rise of multimodality in Language Teaching (LT) and Applied Linguistics. Text, speech, gesture, sound, visuals and space come together (a) in multimodal practices that build meaning. These modes are not separate, they function together. This complexity is found in global classrooms. Learners consume and produce knowledge on and across screens (and platforms) in many languages. Apart from that, teachers adapt too. Podcasts, info graphics, drama, virtual reality and mobile tools are among what they use. Such a transformation will call for new frameworks. Traditional theories don't explain how the learners are engaged, explicated or enhanced. Teaching, learning and assessment must be re-thought. A lot has been written about recent research in terms of many innovations. Language education is dominated by AI powered tutors, gamified lessons, & mobile learning apps. Classroom roles are reshaped by translanguaging and embodied learning. Digital portfolios and multimodal essays try to confront the problem of traditional assessment systems. But it's still the case that many studies look at these trends in isolation. Few link them all within the one multimodal lens. This fills that gap.

The first trend (1) explored is AI and virtual reality, (2) translanguaging, (3) embodied communication, (4) digital multimodal literacies, (5) mobile-assisted language learning, (6) gamification and (7) multimodal assessment comprise of the seven key trends covered in the paper. The aim here has been to see how LT and applied linguistics are formed by these trends. It explains

how they do support learning, where they do not and what research needs to address in the future. It strives to suggest how language education can be more inclusive, more engaging and more effective for teachers, researchers and policy makers alike.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The way that language is learned today, it is no longer text centered. Now, words, images, sound, gesture and digital tools are vehicles for making meaning. This is a reflection of increasing prominence of the multimodality. According to Kress (2010), multimodality is the use of multiple modes to create and to interpret meaning. This concept revolutionizes the way in which teachers teach and students learn in LT and applied linguistics. Social semiotic theory is the base for multimodal approaches. Another theory of communication looks to where communication is socially and culturally shaped (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Learners do not simply decode language, they 'come up' with meaning using various resources. This view is expanded upon by Jewitt (2013) stressing that 'learning' is acquired through visual, auditory, spatial and gestural modes.

Many recent innovations in LT (Language Teaching) have been influenced by these frameworks. AI and virtual reality (VR) is one major area. Chatbots, adaptive platforms and VR simulations personalize language learning. In the article 'Lai and Zheng (2023)' is an example of how AI can provide real time feedback when learners are making mistakes on the screen and helping them develop those skills. VR enhances engagement and context rich interaction according to Yang and Mei (2022). Cost and infrastructure issues (Godwin-Jones, 2021) however continue to restrict these tools to most learners.

Translanguaging is another trend – learners can use all their languages freely. In fact, García and Li Wei (2022) state that translanguaging helps learners access the power they possess, as well as bridging cultural gaps. It further challenges English only policies while it facilitates inclusive pedagogy. However, institutional resistance and assessment limitations prevent its widespread use (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021)

Language acquisition is added a physical layer with embodied learning. McCafferty and Stam (2020) state that gestures, facial expressions and movement help to understand. Learners are able to internalize meaning through drama, role – play and kinesthetic tasks. They build confidence and fluency, especially in speaking. In test focused systems, they are however, underused.

Global communication has instigated the rise of digital multimodal literacies. Now learners create digital stories, info graphics and video essays. According to Hafner and Miller (2023), these activities also help in the development of narrative, critical and media skills. However many teachers are not trained to assess such outputs. Writing that schools frequently render multimodal work optional or peripheral, Serafini (2012) states that schools tend to 'treat design as ornamental' (p. 444).

This is further extended through Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). According to Kukulska Hulme and Viberg (2022) mobile tools foster autonomy, micro learning and personalized practice. These apps (Duolingo, ELSA speak) use a flexible combination of multimodal inputs. Nevertheless, if mobile learning is not well planned it may become superficial, cautions Stockwell (2013). There is also digital inequality. The use of game for education makes use of pedagogy of play. Gamified environments not only boost motivation and vocabulary recall, as it is reported by Reinhardt (2019). Game based learning such as Kahoot or language quests are very immersive and goal driven. However, a word of caution comes from Plass et al. (2015) to avoid overly relying on rewards which can decrease intrinsic motivation.

Multimodal assessment is also finally new ways of knowing. Through digital portfolios, presentations and creative projects learners demonstrate skills. Cope and Kalantzis (2020) recommend that such assessments are real world communication. Improved engagement and performance are highlighted by Hung and Chiu (2023). But many teachers do not have valid rubrics. Such methods are usually ignored when it comes to standardized systems.

In general, one overarching pattern present across these studies. Deeper engagement, stronger learner identity and more inclusive pedagogy is supported by multimodality. There are given barriers of access, teacher trainings and institutional alignment. This review is a confirmation that

multimodal approaches are not just the current trends, they are the response deal with the contemporary communication demands of the 21st century.

METHODOLOGY

Literature is reviewed using a qualitative, interpretive approach. It also makes an attempt to identify and synthesize recent research on multimodal trends in Language Teaching (LT) and Applied Linguistics. It attempts to research how current multimodal practices shape and are shaped by theory, pedagogy and assessment in various learning contexts. Decided that peer reviewed articles, books and systematic reviews were selected that have been published between 2010 and 2024. ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR and Google Scholar were the main databases. Chosen the search terms like: 'multimodality in ELT', 'digital literacies in language learning', 'AI and VR in applied linguistics', 'translanguaging pedagogy', 'multimodal assessment' and 'gamification in second language learning'. The contributed landmark theoretical works such as Kress, Jewitt and García; Cope and Kalantzis and others that formed multimodal discourse.

Selected studies about LT or applied linguistics which dealt with multimodal, digital, embodied or mobile enhanced practices which reported empirical findings or pedagogical frameworks or critical perspectives, in English. I excluded opinion pieces that lack scholarly references, articles only including pure technology evaluation rather than a language learning context and studies that are outside of LT or Applied Linguistics.

Thematic analysis was applied and coded studies according to emerging trends such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), translanguaging, embodied learning, mobile learning, gamification and multimodal assessment. Key contributions, gaps and recurring theoretical frameworks were identified. Findings across contexts were then compared and implications for learners, teachers and institutions were evaluated.

With this method of workflow, a structured, comparative synthesis of heterogeneous multimodal practices could be attained. The approach guaranteed that the review remained on track, relevant and based in recent credible research.

Analysis and Discussion

In this section, a critical analysis and synthesis (c.f. Olsen, 2004) of the seven key multimodal trends as discussed through the literature review, is discussed, elaborating on how each contributes to the changing landscape of Language Teaching (LT) and Applied Linguistics. By drawing on empirical evidence and theoretical insights, the discussion shows how these trends (AI and virtual reality, translanguaging, embodied communication, digital literacies, mobile assisted language learning, gamification and multimodal assessment) together redefine language pedagogy, learner engagement and assessment. In each case the trend is analyzed both on its own as well as within the framework of broader educational theories including social semiotics, sociocultural theory and multimodal discourse analysis to reveal underlying pedagogical implications. In addition, challenges with integrating such practices into various classroom contexts (including access, teacher readiness, policy alignment and cultural resistance) are critically reflected upon. Discusses trends that are limited and have benefits of each by demonstrating how their successful incorporation might alter the makeup of 21st century LT classes and the structural and pedagogical shifts necessary for effective and just implementation.

Table 1. Integration of AI and Virtual Reality (VR) in LT

Aspect	Detailed Explanation	Examples	Benefits	Challenges	References (APA)
AI-Based Chatbots & Virtual Assistants	AI-driven agents that simulate dialogue and give feedback.	ChatGPT, Grammarly, ELSA Speak	Real-time feedback, personalization	Limited empathy, contextual gaps	Lai & Zheng (2023); Godwin-Jones (2021)
Immersive Virtual Reality	Simulates cultural and conversational contexts.	Virtual simulations	Engagement, contextual immersion	Cost, infrastructure needs	Yang & Mei (2022); Lee & Park (2021)

Augmented Reality	Overlays media onto real-world spaces.	AR-based games and flashcards	Interactive, real-world learning	Requires tech access	Godwin-Jones (2021)
Speech Recognition	Automated feedback on fluency and pronunciation.	ELSA Speak, SpeechAce	Instant correction	Accent bias	Lai & Zheng (2023)
AI-Adaptive Systems	Adjust content based on learner data.	Duolingo, Babbel	Tailored instruction	Reduced teacher presence	Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg (2022)

Artificial intelligence and virtual reality integration in Language Teaching (LT) is a radical departure from endemic, static and generalist oriented traditional English language learning. However, increasingly, AI based chatbots and virtual assistants simulate real-time conversations, provide immediate and personalized feedback which facilitates learner autonomy and learning skills – the case of ChatGPT, Grammarly and ELSA Speak (Lai & Zheng, 2023; (Godwin-Jones, 2021). Sometimes, however, these tools are short of empathy and contextual understanding. Virtual reality (VR) immersive environments such as virtual simulations, can create cultural and conversational contexts which in turn can promote user engagement and provide extensive contextual immersion in language use (Yang & Mei, 2022; Lee & Park, 2021). However, these tools are out their price range and beyond the infrastructure they need. One of this was Augmented Reality (AR) which overlays digital content on physical environments and has been implemented through AR based games and flashcards. Its benefits come with the downside, as it requires stable technological access (Godwin-Jones, 2021). Meanwhile, we have speech recognition technologies platform like Speech Ace and ELSA Speak that enable learners to get immediate pronunciation feedback. These systems however, can be biased towards certain accents (Lai & Zheng, 2023). Lastly, Duolingo and Babble are two of the AI adaptive learning systems that learn with the learner performance and is customized as per the performance so that it acts as a customized learner path. In addition, they help to personalize the study, but the risk of reducing the role of the teacher in saving and human interaction (Kukulska Hulme & Viberg, 2022). And while these innovations are in step with the multimodal shift in ELT, the study warns that in order for these innovations to be successfully integrated, they must confront access, training and ethical challenges.

Table 2. Translanguaging and Multilingual Pedagogy

Aspect	Detailed Explanation	Examples	Benefits	Challenges	References (APA)
Translanguaging Definition	Use of all languages as resources.	Code-switching, bilingual tasks	Supports identity, comprehension	Misunderstood, underused	García & Li Wei (2022)
Pedagogical Translanguaging	Strategic classroom implementation.	Bilingual journals, dual texts	Reduces cognitive load	Lack of training	Creese & Blackledge (2015)
Multimodal Translanguaging	Mixing modes and languages.	Digital storytelling with L1/L2	Fosters creativity	Hard to assess	Sultana (2021)
Community & Identity	Connects cultural background to learning.	Personal narratives in L1	Boosts confidence	Institutional bias	García & Kleyn (2016)

Translanguaging and multilingual pedagogy is identified as a key trend in multimodal Language Teaching (LT), demonstrating the enriching effect they can have in realizing learner engagement and taking account of diversity. Learners, who can code switch and perform bilingual tasks, use languages based on meaning making – a commonly known definition for translanguaging (García & Li Wei, 2022). Though it has many advantages, traditional classrooms use it too little and misunderstand it. The intentional and structured invoking of all that learners can bring in their linguistic repertoires in classrooms which includes making use of their whole linguistic repertoire to complete an activity or task in which a teacher zones in on a single language of property or topic of study (for example,

writing bilingual journals or dual language texts), is termed pedagogical translanguaging (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). Unfortunately, it has been little implemented because of the absence of teacher training. Also introduced in the study is multimodal translanguaging, meaning combining languages and modes (such as in digital storytelling projects including both L1 and L2) to promote creativity and multimodal expression (Sultana, 2021). But the rubrics are not there yet and it's hard to assess work of such quality. Finally, the study notes how translanguaging allows for the strengthening and building the community by linking students cultural backgrounds with the classroom content via first language narratives supporting learner confidence and participation (García & Kleyn, 2016). However institutional bias often precludes the full acceptance of such practices. The study then contends that, based on this, translanguaging is not just a linguistic strategy but a transformative pedagogical approach which is in line with the vision of 21st century language education as a multimodal and inclusive experience.

Table 3. Embodied Communication and Gestural Interaction

ect	Detailed Explanation	Examples	Benefits	Challenges	References (APA)
Embodied Cognition	Learning involves physical interaction.	Gesture while learning	Reinforces retention	Limited teacher training	McCafferty & Stam (2020)
Gesture as Meaning Resource	Visual cues support learning.	Acting out verbs	Multimodal input	Cultural misinterpretation	McNeill (2005)
Drama & Role-play	Uses emotion and expression.	Simulations, improv	Fluency and empathy	Time and space limits	Maley & Duff (2005)
Tactile/Kinesthetic Learning	Movement-based activities.	Word card games	Engages learners physically	Resource needs	Tomlinson (2012)

This study stresses embodied communication and gestural interactions as trends taking born and enriching multimodal language teaching (LT) as the body is acknowledged as a means of meaning making. Such an approach is rooted in embodied cognition theory to view learning as a physical process, where gestures used during instruction bolster learners' memory and understanding (McCafferty & Stam, 2020). Unfortunately, because these techniques are not often taught to teachers, they aren't used effectively. Visual gestures double as meaning making tools, showing learners verbs or miming concepts, giving learners input in the modality to support comprehension. However, gestures are culturally specific and can maybe understood (McNeill, 2005). The study also states how drama and role play use simulations and improvisation which enhance fluency as well as emotional connection and empathy in learning (Maley & Duff, 2005). However, with benefits, these activities are restricted by tight time and absence of space in a traditional classroom setting. Tactile and kinesthetic learning such as movement led word card activities are also a way to include physical engagement and appeal to different styles of learners (Tomlinson, 2012). However, these activities need extra materials and classroom resources and sometimes you don't have them. By highlighting that embodied learning and the multimodal transition in LT do not conflict but in fact create rapport with learning through physical, emotional and sensory aspects of communication, overall the study points out that systemic challenges have yet to enable mass adoption.

Table 4. Digital Multimodal Literacies in LT

Aspect	Detailed Explanation	Examples	Benefits	Challenges	References (APA)
Digital Storytelling	Learners combine images, sound, and text.	WeVideo, Adobe Spark	Fosters creativity	Needs tech access	Hafner & Miller (2023)

Video Essays and Vlogging	Learners present content through video.	Classroom YouTube projects	Improves planning and fluency	Plagiarism risks	Hafner (2014)
Infographics and Visual Mapping	Learners summarize data visually.	Canva, Piktochart	Supports synthesis	May distract from content	Unsworth (2006)
Social Media Texts	Real-world digital discourse.	Memes, microblogs	Engages informal literacy	May clash with curriculum	Tagg (2015)

Digital multimodal literacies are singled out as an important trend in changing Language Teaching (LT) to make it more a true reflection of contemporary communication. Today learners in the classroom aren't limited to a single text, but instead traverse language as images, sound and video and design. As an example, students are able to combine text, visuals and audio in a creative and engaging way through the digital storytelling technique, using tools such as WeVideo and Adobe Spark, who allow the development of the narrative skill and the media literacy, but it depends on the access to the technology (Hafner & Miller, 2023). Video essays and vlogging like YouTube class projects, for example, help develop fluency, planning and public speaking skills of the students but there are higher risks of plagiarism if not guided carefully (Hafner, 2014). Learners can use infographics and visual mapping tools like Canva and Piktochart to visually synthesise complex data to aid its interpretation and design. While, as Unsworth (2006) noted, an overemphasis on visual aesthetics can get in the way of comprehending the content, what we find is that images in articles are not included simply to make the magazines pretty or to amuse those who read them. But most importantly, the use of social media texts—including microblogs and memes—is currently bringing classroom learning together with actual digital discourse, promotes informal literacies and yet perhaps counters standard curricular expectations (Tagg, 2015). It is argued overall that these digital multimodal practices help facilitate creativity, critical thinking and engagement as situated within social semiotic and sociocultural theories. This notwithstanding, barriers to plural integration in diverse learning contexts abound: inequalities in tech access, curriculum constraints and teacher preparedness challenges.

Table 5. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Aspect	Detailed Explanation	Examples	Benefits	Challenges	References (APA)
Definition of MALL	Learning through mobile tools.	Duolingo, Memrise	Flexible, autonomous learning	Digital divide	Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg (2022)
Context-Aware Learning	Location-based interaction.	GPS language apps	Authentic learning	Design challenges	Traxler (2020)
Gamified Mobile Learning	Mobile apps with game elements.	Kahoot, Quizlet Live	Boosts motivation	Shallow input risk	Reinhardt (2019)
Collaborative Mobile Learning	Group-based mobile interaction.	WhatsApp tasks	Promotes peer learning	Hard to monitor	Viberg (2014)

This concept focuses on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) as a powerful multimodal trend on the road to fundamentally revising Language Teaching (LT) by means of portability, personalization and real time interaction. Falling under the MALL (mobile assisted language learning) umbrella, platforms such as Duolingo and Memrise afford learners the ability to practice language in a way that is flexible, self-paced and more autonomous (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2022). Yet in under resourced contexts device and internet access is still unequal and this is a key challenge. Context-aware learning can be counted in as one subdomain where language learning is connected with the real world, with help of apps having GPS, thus allowing authentic situated learning to take place (Traxler, 2020). However designing such apps to strike a balance between pedagogy and usability is a challenge. Gamified mobile learning was done through platforms like Kahoot and Quizlet LIVE that includes game like features like points, leaderboards, and quizzes along

with the learning process. This way of working is enjoyable, but it can make for shallow engagement unless, like Reinhardt (2019), it is rooted in more meaningful learning objectives. Furthermore, collaborative mobile learning is boosted by peer interaction through WhatsApp tasks which enables group communication and it is also coherent with social constructivist learning. However, these informal exchanges are hard to monitor and measure systematically (Viberg, 2014). The conclusion of the study is that MALL fits within multimodal frameworks and addresses inclusive and learner centered instruction, but needs to overcome access problems and make sure that the pedagogical depth is maintained while training teachers to use its full potential.

Table 6. Gamification and Interactive Multimodal Environments in LT

Aspect	Detailed Explanation	Examples	Benefits	Challenges	References (APA)
Gamification Definition	Game elements in learning tasks.	Points, badges, quests	Increases engagement	Can reduce intrinsic motivation	Reinhardt (2019)
Game-Based Learning	Using full to games to teach language.	Language RPGs	Immersive experience	Few high-quality games	Peterson (2013)
Escape Rooms	Problem-solving with language.	ELT escape games	Promotes teamwork	Resource-heavy	Pacheco (2021)
Digital Badging	Micro-credentials for tasks.	Open Badge Factory	Tracks progress	Risk of gamification fatigue	Mah (2016)

Gamification and interactive multimodal environments are found to be an emerging trend in Language Teaching (LT) and the study highlights how these developments can be used to create dynamic means for increasing learner motivation, engagement and retention. The use of game elements like points, badges and quests in non-game learning contexts, defined as gamification, is proven to increase learner participation and enjoyment (Reinhardt, 2019). But, the study warns that the overzealous reliance on external incentives can decrease intrinsic motivation, provided those external incentives aren't balanced. Then, there is game based learning, where we apply complete digital games for learning—for instance role playing games (RPGs)—that provide deeply immersive environments in which learners learn language skills within context rich contexts. The problem with this is that high quality, pedagogically sound, language games are hard to come by (Peterson, 2013). The other innovative method that can be used is LT escape rooms where timed challenges and collaborative problem solving activities are used to incorporate language tasks. Although these are good because they promote teamwork and critical thinking, they tend to be resource-intensive and difficult to schedule regularly (Pacheco, 2021). In that case, digital badging systems like Open Badge Factory also provides micro credentials that serve as a record of a learner's achievements and makes learning goal oriented. Although, the downside of this practice is that learners can get burned out with gamification fatigue by means of redundant or repetitious reward systems (Mah, 2016). The study places these approaches within this broader trend towards multimodal, learner centered pedagogy but also considers the need to implement such practice with intention, to design it with thought and to prepare teachers to add value as opposed to diluting the depth of language learning.

Table 7. Multimodal Assessment Approaches in LT

Aspect	Detailed Explanation	Examples	Benefits	Challenges	References (APA)
Digital Portfolios	Collections of multimodal tasks.	Google Sites, Seesaw	Shows learner growth	Needs time to assess	Hung & Chiu (2023)
Audio-Visual Presentations	Spoken content with visuals.	Video essays, TED talks	Boosts expression	Tech barriers	Hafner (2014)

Infographic Assessment	Visual summaries of learning.	Posters, timelines	Simplifies data	Focus may shift to design	Serafini (2012)
Peer and Self-Assessment	Learners review each other.	Feedback on videos	Encourages reflection	May lack consistency	Andrade & Du (2007)

The study also declares that the assessment trend that Language Teaching (ELT) is moving towards is the multimodal assessment which will change the way learners' skills and progress are assessed in the digital age. Unlike written traditional exams and class tests which assess the ability to communicate in printed writing, multimodal assessment utilizes a variety of tools in a variety of formats that mirror the different ways the learners communicate today. Digital portfolios (Hung & Chiu, 2023) also known as electronic portfolios or portfolios, formed via platforms like Google Sites and Seesaw, constitute a collection of student projects such as videos, visuals, texts, showcasing a complete process of learner development over time. But the evaluation of this sort requires immense time and effort. Through its audio-visual presentation form (e.g., video essays and TED talks) applications such as video essays can help learners to express ideas through spoken language and visuals, stirring confidence and oral fluency. But, some of these tasks may be hampered by technological limitations in low resource classrooms (Hafner, 2014). Info graphic assessment allows the learners to summarize the content in visual form such as posters or timelines which in turn supports synthesis and critical thinking. According to the study though, an emphasis on design may potentially lead to victimizing content accuracy (Serafini, 2012). Finally, video feedback facilitates peer and self-assessment which will help promote learner autonomy but also makes learner assessment inconsistent if learners are not trained in this manner (Andrade & Du, 2007). Finally, the study claims that since multimodal assessment acknowledges various ways of meaning making, it works well with social semiotic and sociocultural theories' principles. However, without valid rubrics and training and institutional back up to face the implementation and equity challenges, educators will not be able to fully reap its potential.

Through this review we demonstrate how multimodal approaches alter the manner in which we conceptualize language learning. Theories have to progress. Learner's use of modes beyond words is explained by social semiotics and sociocultural framework. Students talk, gesture, draw and move around and also use digital tools to interact. They are a way meaning is carried. This is something researchers and educators have to be aware of. They don't fit old definitions of language competence. If we are to meet the cognitive demands of the future we must expand what we teach and how we assess.

New strategies are needed for teachers. Grammar drills and written tests cannot be all they use. Learners of today are very much living in digital, visual and interactive environments. In the classroom teachers must reflect that reality. Video projects, mobile app projects and gesture based projects should be included. And translanguaging also matters. It means that students should use all of their languages to think, construct meaning and communicate. To guide this shift in learning teachers need training. And many still do not have the tools or the support.

And policy has to catch up. The national exams are testing over and done with skills. But they ignore how people actually use language. Curricula therefore need to be revised. Creativity, collaboration and multimodal expression are values that they need to have. They (the schools) need funding for devices, for internet access for everybody and for teacher development. These methods cannot be implement with the support of the teachers. Innovation has to move out of pilot classrooms into the system wide practice.

Deeper questions must be asked by researchers. Several studies detail tools. For few it's long term impact that gets explored. What we need, are studies that follow learner growth over time. And we need research in under researched areas as well. Mobile tools and digital platform are not accessible to all learners at the same rate. These gaps must be studied. They should also look at how culture affects the way we learn multimodal. One area doesn't work in another. Now these implications matter. Students use multi modal tools every day in their lives. Schools have no choice but to respond. Lead teachers. Guide is what researchers must do. But policy must help this happen.

Implications

This review demonstrates that approaches that mix several ways of teaching change the definition of language learning. Theories cannot stay the same. Learners use modes beyond words and social semiotics and sociocultural frameworks explain this. Students talk, gesture, draw, move and interact through digital tools. These meanings are carried by modes. This is something that researchers, educators, etc. must acknowledge. Definitions of language competence as old as knowledge in general are no longer in agreement. What we teach and how we assess need to broaden.

The teachers need new strategies. When the ability to speak a language is based only on grammar drills and written tests in schools and universities these cannot be relied upon entirely. Our learners live in digital, visual and interactive environments, today. The classroom must reflect that reality for teachers. Video projects, mobile apps and gesture based tasks are some of the things they should be including. It also matters what is called translanguaging. All our languages should be used to think and speak in. This shift needs to be guided by teachers and they need training. All still lack the tools and support.

There is a need for policy to catch up and National exams old skills. How people actually use language is ignored. Curricula should be revised by policy makers. Their stakeholders must desire creativity, collaboration and/or multimodal expression. Fundamental to all of this, schools need money for devices, for internet and for teacher development. Using these methods is just not possible without support. Innovation must become system wide practice.

So researchers must ask deeper questions. Tools are described by many studies. Not many investigate long term impact. It is also important to have studies tracking growth of the learners over a period. There is also research that has to be done in under resourced places. Not all learners have access to the same amount of mobile tools or digital platforms. Getting buyers to exchange different kinds of information such as better data and greater intelligence from sensors, would indeed require new methods and studies must explore these gaps. In addition they should study how culture affects multimodal learning. Another thing is what works in one place doesn't necessary work in another. These implications are important now. Multimodal tools are already used by the students in their lives. Schools need to answer with changes. Those in charge of kids which, of course, is the teacher, must lead. Guiding is researchers. And this change must be supported by policy.

Limitations

This review is concerning the published trends. It does not include data of direct classroom. It thus limits what we can say about classroom realities. They are many studies that are coming from well-funded, urban context. They very often do not consider rural or low resource settings. That makes a divide between research and practice. Most sources stress on benefits. When and why multimodal approaches fail is little explored. Overgeneralization is a result. Studies don't generally report on the resistance that teacher's experience. Stable internet and up to date devices are often a requirement for many tools. Mentioned in this review, these problems are not measured, however. It also compares a variety of trends. Because of that broad scope, each trend isn't very deep. We can't provide a full analysis of all of the tools or contexts and highlight key features. Research also changes fast. And there are some trends which may change yet before more evidence is available.

Finally, the review is from an English dominant perspective. Although it is focused on ELT and may not be applicable to non-EL (English language) education. Generalizability of findings is affected by that. This does not weaken the insights. However they warn us to consider the discoveries with care. They can be filled by more targeted studies.

Future Research Directions

Researchers have to go beyond tool descriptions. Their final recommendation was that these researchers should look at how multimodal practices affect learning in the long haul. They [the studies] can also show us what changes stick – longitudinal studies. They can also show when and why learners lose interest. These patterns are important to sustainable innovation.

Classroom ethnographies are also important. Researchers should look at how teachers and students use multimodal tools every day. It should also tell them how learners switch between speech, text, gestures and visualization. What works, what fails and why can be explained by these studies?

Underrepresented contexts must be subject of more work. Studies concentrate most often on urban schools or universities. Less attention is paid to rural areas, public institutions and low income learners. Each of these contexts is challenged. It means research must reflect that reality. More needs to be explored on teacher beliefs. Change is resisted by many teachers. Some innovate without support. Studies should look into the influence of beliefs, training and local culture on 'practice'. It would also ensure that policy works with what really is needed in the classroom. We also need work around inclusion. Which factors determine 'access to multimodality' – gender, language background or disability? Learners with little or no digital literacy, how are (are they) barred? Questions that researchers need to ask to ensure equity. Finally, scholars should have stronger frameworks built. If we are to construct, evaluate and reflect on teaching as multimodal, we need models that are clear. Without theory it remains scattered. Policy stays slow without research. It connects the three, something future studies must do.

CONCLUSION

More generally, this study has critically examined how multi-modal is changing Language Teaching (LT) and Applied Linguistics in ways that are not simply pedagogical faddishness but essential parts of the base of 21 century language education. It proposed and established through a systematic review of the empirical and theoretical literature that multimodal approaches (from AI integration and virtual environments to translanguaging, embodied communication, digital literacies, mobile learning, gamification and multimodal assessment) redefine how language is taught, learned and evaluated. Such trends are based on social semiotic theory (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and sociocultural frameworks (Jewitt, 2013; García & Li Wei, 2022), whereby meaning making is conceived of as the combination of linguistic, visual, gestural, spatial and technological resources used by learners in the construction of meaning.

The pedagogical value of these approaches is clearly evidenced by AI and VR tools being personalization (Lai & Zheng, 2023), language translanguaging fostering inclusive and identity confirming practices (García & Kley, 2016) and embodied learning for deeper comprehension through physical interaction (McCafferty & Stam, 2020). Similarly, mobile assisted learning and digital literacies encourage learner autonomy and critical engagement (Kukulska Hulme & Viberg, 2022, Hafner & Miller, 2023) and gamification and multidisciplinary assessment encourage motivation and realistic communicative competence (Reinhardt, 2019, Hung & Chiu, 2023). Together these innovations redefine language competence beyond text to include voice, image, gesture, interaction and design.

However, it simultaneously recognizes many implementation barriers. Yet, many of these approaches require (and often assume) technological access, teacher training and institutional alignment, all things that are not evenly distributed, particularly in the context of the under resourced. Furthermore, dependence on digital tools brings along some risks like shallow engagement, prejudice in AI frameworks, plagiarism in video content and problems with fair evaluation except if supported by proper rubrics. Cultural, policy and curricular constraints, as well, often make it difficult to integrate progressive practices such as translanguaging or embodied learning, reducing them to secondary (optional) strategies.

Importantly, the review also points out longitudinal and context specific research gap. Though numerous studies emphasize benefits, relatively little research tests the long term consequences or long term sustainability of these innovations, especially in diverse sociolinguistic environments. Therefore, future work requires transcending tool centric evaluations to become critically ethnographic and provide inclusive pedagogical models for classroom realities, especially in Global South contexts. Teachers need to be repositioned not only as 'multimodal learning facilitators' but also as 'co-designers of practice from the BLT's (best learning theories and best evidence).

Finally, the millions of users, who have for sure encountered multimodal elements whilst learning English, have experienced a transformation, not an auxiliary improvement of LT. It is, therefore, equity, inclusion and learner agency based and requires reimagining curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Since multimodal innovations will not be the sole property of elite, well-funded institutions, policymakers, educators and researchers must work together to create ways in which multimodal is made accessible, meaningful and impactful available to increasingly diverse learning populations. Yet the evidence shows that the promise of multimodal LT is both pedagogically sound

and urgently needed and without such systemic commitment, the full potential of multimodal LT will remain unrealized.

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