

Enacting Multiliteracy in Young Learners' English Classrooms: A Case Study of Primary Teachers

Ramadhani Uswatun Khasanah ^{1*}, Ragil Dian Purnama Putri ²

¹ Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia;

² Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia;


¹ ramadhani.khasanah@pgsd.uad.ac.id; ² ragil.putri@pgsd.uad.ac.id

* ramadhani.khasanah@pgsd.uad.ac.id

Received: November 6, 2025

Revised: November 22, 2025

Accepted: November 26, 2025

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Multiliteracy, English, young learners, primary education	<p>Multiliteracy focuses on multimodal communication and linguistic and cultural diversity. It is increasingly relevant in 21st-century primary education. In Indonesian elementary English classrooms, multiliteracy opens space for more engaging learning but also introduces pedagogical and infrastructural constraints. This study explores how primary teachers implement multiliteracy-oriented practices in English lessons and identifies the challenges that arise during classroom application. Employing a qualitative case study, data were gathered through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving six teachers. The results show that teachers integrated various multimodal resources, such as images, songs, videos, and mobile devices. The teachers also applied interactive strategies, including role-play, games, and group discussion. Furthermore, the teachers modified teaching materials to accommodate students' proficiency levels. Nonetheless, limited student vocabulary, inadequate technological support, and teachers' restricted English competence emerged as key barriers. Despite these constraints, students responded positively to multimodal and interactive activities, displaying strong enthusiasm and engagement in the learning process.</p> <p>This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA license.</p> 

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology in the Society 5.0 era demands literacy practices that enable students to navigate multimodal information effectively. Ideally, English instruction in primary schools should foster communicative competence supported by multiliteracy skills, allowing learners to interpret, evaluate, and construct meaning across various digital and non-digital formats (Putri & Maryani, 2021; Selayani & Bayu, 2023). Teachers are

expected to integrate multimodal resources such as images, infographics, videos, and interactive digital tools (Rowse & Walsh, 2011), thereby creating learning environments that are relevant to students' linguistic, cultural, and technological contexts.

However, classroom practices in Indonesia do not fully reflect these expectations. Observations and preliminary findings at MIN 3 Musi Rawas indicate that English instruction from Grades 1 to 6 is delivered by general classroom teachers due to the absence of a specialized English teacher. This condition limits the integration of multimodal materials, consistent with prior studies reporting that many primary teachers continue to rely on conventional teaching methods focused on memorization and written exercises with minimal media use (Sukma et al., 2023). Challenges such as limited teacher competence in English, insufficient understanding of multiliteracy concepts, and inadequate technological infrastructure further constrain implementation (Sukma et al., 2023; Herdiawan et al., 2021). Although multiliteracy-based instruction has been shown to enhance students' motivation, engagement, and confidence (Almusharraf & Engemann, 2020; Zhang & Zou, 2020), these benefits are not yet maximized in many Indonesian classrooms.

This discrepancy illustrates a clear gap between the ideal expectations of multiliteracy-based English instruction and the reality experienced in schools, particularly those without trained English teachers. While the literature highlights both the benefits and barriers of multiliteracy, empirical studies examining how primary and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* teachers operationalize multiliteracy in English lessons within limited-resource contexts remain scarce.

To address this gap, the present study proposes an in-depth exploration of multiliteracy practices as implemented by classroom teachers. This study offers a developmental contribution by mapping concrete instructional strategies, multimodal resources, and adaptive practices used in English classrooms, while also identifying challenges that hinder their optimal use. Prior research has demonstrated that multiliteracy-oriented digital media can strengthen learning outcomes (Almusharraf & Engemann, 2020) and enhance contextual language use (Zhang & Zou, 2020), providing a foundation for the solutions explored in this study. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on multiliteracy implementation within a *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* setting where English is taught by non-specialist teachers, an area that remains underexplored in multiliteracy scholarship. This context allows the study to uncover unique pedagogical adaptations and resource-management strategies relevant to similar schools across Indonesia.

Given ongoing demands for digital-era competencies, this research is urgent as it provides empirical insights that can inform teacher training, classroom innovation, and policy development to support multiliteracy in early English education. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine how classroom teachers at MIN 3 Musi Rawas implement multiliteracy in

English instruction, identify the multimodal strategies and resources they employ, and analyze the challenges they encounter in applying multiliteracy practices in a low-resource primary school context.

Method

This study employed a qualitative exploratory case study design to investigate how primary classroom teachers implement multiliteracy practices in English instruction. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences, classroom practices, and contextual constraints that shape instructional decision-making (Creswell, 2023). The case study design provided a holistic understanding of multiliteracy enactment within its real classroom context (Choi & Yi, 2016).

The research was conducted at MIN 3 Musi Rawas. Its selected school is because English is taught by classroom teachers rather than English teachers. The site was purposively selected because this condition reflects a common situation in Indonesian primary schools, thus making it relevant for examining multiliteracy practices in resource-limited environments. Six classroom teachers participated in the study, selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) being a classroom teacher in the selected primary school, (2) having responsibility for teaching English, and (3) representing varied years of teaching experience to capture diverse instructional practices and perspectives.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore teachers' perceptions, strategies, and challenges in applying multiliteracy practices, guided by an interview protocol that ensured consistency while allowing flexibility for deeper probing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Classroom observations were conducted to document real-time teaching activities, the use of multimodal texts, digital media, and interactive strategies. An observation sheet based on multiliteracy indicators was used to maintain focus during the observation process. Document analysis included reviewing lesson plans, instructional materials, student work samples, and school documents to provide additional evidence regarding the integration of multiliteracy into instructional planning and classroom implementation. The instrument blueprint is presented on table 1.

Table 1. The Instrument blueprints

Data Source	Indicator of Multiliteracy	Description
Interview and Observation	Use of multimodal resources	Integration of visuals, audio, videos, or digital tools in English lessons
Interview	Teacher understanding	Teachers' knowledge of multiliteracy concepts and strategies
Observation	Classroom practices	Activities, teaching methods, and student engagement
Document Analysis	Instructional materials	Lesson plans and media reflecting multiliteracy components

To ensure data credibility, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was conducted to confirm the accuracy of interpreted interview responses, and peer debriefing was used to enhance the reliability of the analytical process. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Coding was carried out inductively to identify emerging themes related to multiliteracy strategies, multimodal resource use, and implementation challenges.

Result and Discussion

1. Multiliteracy Implementation in the English Classroom

The implementation of multiliteracy in the English Classroom at MIM 3 Musi Rawas involved three aspects: utilization of multimodal media, variation in teaching methods, and adaptation of teaching materials.

a. Utilization of Multimodal Media

The findings indicate that teachers employed multimodal methods of communication to enrich classroom interaction and learning experiences. Data from interviews and classroom observations revealed frequent use of pictures, songs, videos, and even mobile devices. For instance, Teacher F explained, "Sometimes I use a picture or song as teaching media," while Teacher E stated, "I have also used video before." Similarly, Teacher D emphasized, "I use pictures, video, and English songs." These varied practices suggest that multimodal resources were intentionally integrated into lessons to enhance engagement, provide alternative channels of meaning, and accommodate students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



Figure 1. The teacher is using video and pictures to teach English

The effectiveness of such practices resonates with the principles of multimodality, which propose that meaning is constructed not only through language but also through visual, auditory, and gestural modes. According to Mills & Exley (2014), multimodal texts in classrooms allow students to negotiate meaning more effectively by combining multiple semiotic resources. Likewise, Maureen Walsh (2010) emphasizes that integrating digital and multimodal media fosters deeper comprehension and encourages student participation. The observed increase in student enthusiasm and active involvement when exposed to songs, pictures, and videos reflects how multimodal strategies scaffold learning by providing richer input and varied representational forms.

Furthermore, the integration of multimodal and digital tools aligns with contemporary perspectives on culturally responsive pedagogy and digital literacies. As we argue, classrooms that incorporate multimodal communication not only support meaning-making but also reflect the communicative practices of the 21st century. In the context of linguistic diversity, such practices create inclusive spaces where learners with different backgrounds can access and process knowledge in ways that resonate with their prior experiences and preferences. Thus, the use of multimodal methods in this study illustrates a pedagogical shift towards more dynamic, interactive, and equitable learning environments.

b. Variation in Teaching Methods

The findings indicate that the teachers did not restrict themselves to a single instructional approach but instead employed a variety of methods to facilitate student learning. Traditional strategies such as translation, lectures, and direct explanation were combined with more interactive techniques, including games, role-play, and group discussions. As expressed by Teacher F, "The methods that I use are lectures, playing games, and sometimes I also have discussions with the students." Similarly, Teacher E reported, "I implemented conventional methods and technology-based methods." These statements highlight a deliberate blending of approaches that demonstrate teachers' responsiveness to diverse classroom contexts.

Those findings can be framed as an enactment of socio-constructivist pedagogy and contemporary adaptive teaching principles. Socio-constructivist theory, rooted in Vygotsky's work, foregrounds the social nature of learning: learners construct knowledge through mediated interaction, with more capable others providing support that is gradually withdrawn, and it is called scaffolding (Kraatz et al., 2020). In classroom practice, techniques such as role-play and collaborative small-group tasks instantiate this perspective by creating structured opportunities for peer interaction, dialogic knowledge construction, and co-regulation of understanding (Caretti, A. & Marije, 2024). Empirical and conceptual reviews emphasize teacher scaffolding and peer engagement as core mechanisms through which group activities improve conceptual development.

c. Adaptation of Teaching Materials

Most teachers modified textbook content to suit students' proficiency levels and local cultural contexts. One teacher stated, "I adapted the material from the textbook but I adjusted it to the students' abilities" (Teacher F). This illustrates key features of multiliteracy pedagogy, particularly its emphasis on contextualized, flexible, and learner-responsive design (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020).

Additionally, teachers engaged in self-learning to compensate for limitations in English proficiency. Teacher E explained, "Before entering the classroom, I study the material first," while Teacher F highlighted practicing speaking as preparation. These strategies connect to Pereira, Í., Gil & Sylla (2023) concept of overt instruction, where teachers deliberately consolidate their understanding before facilitating learning.

Therefore, the implementation of multiliteracy in English classroom could be visualized on the Figure 2.

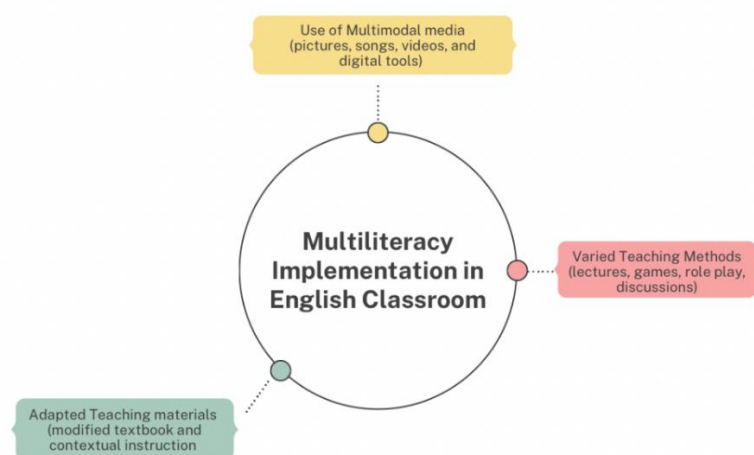


Figure 2. Implementation of Multiliteracy in English Classroom

2. Challenges in Multiliteracy Implementation

The findings of this study reveal that teachers encounter multiple barriers in implementing effective multiliteracy practices in Indonesian primary schools.

a. Linguistic Barriers

Students' frequent use of local languages caused difficulties in pronunciation and comprehension: "Because students are accustomed to using local languages... they find it difficult in pronunciation" (Teacher F).

These results substantiate Cummins (2000) linguistic interdependence hypothesis, illustrating that without explicit bridging strategies, home language dominance can hinder academic English development. Similar issues were reported by Sulistiyo (2016), particularly in rural Indonesian contexts.

b. Limited Infrastructure

Teachers reported "poor signal, power outages, and limited school facilities" that required resource-sharing (Teacher F). This reflects persistent digital disparities documented in Wahyono et al. (2020) and limits the integration of multimodal resources foundational to multiliteracy (Pereira, Í., Gil & Sylla, 2023; Hong & Tan, 2020).

c. Teacher Preparedness

Some teachers noted mismatches between their educational backgrounds and teaching responsibilities: "Because it does not match my educational background, I find it difficult to deliver the material" (Teacher F).

This supports findings by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasize the importance of teacher knowledge and professional training in supporting multiliteracy. Previous research also highlights a limited understanding of multiliteracy among Indonesian primary teachers (Hong & Tan, 2020).

3. Student Engagement

The findings of this study reveal that teachers encounter multiple barriers in implementing effective multiliteracy practices in Indonesian primary schools. Interestingly, even with these challenges, students were generally enthusiastic when teachers used interactive activities and multimodal media. Games, songs, and visual materials were particularly effective in drawing participation. This reinforces the idea that young learners are highly responsive to multimodal and play-based approaches, which increase motivation and make language learning more meaningful (Alvermann & Sanders, 2019; Dewi et al., 2023).

The data suggest that students exhibit high levels of engagement and motivation when interactive methods such as role-play are integrated into English learning. As observed, the students were enthusiastic when the teacher invited them to play roles in English (Teacher C,

Observation), and “The students appeared enthusiastic and eager in following the lesson” (Teacher D, Interview). These accounts highlight how pedagogical strategies that prioritize active participation and experiential learning can enhance learners’ affective involvement in the classroom.



Figure 3. The students practice the introduction in front of the class after watching the videos (a) and (b)

Role-play, as a form of transformed practice within multiliteracy pedagogy, enables students to move beyond being passive recipients of information toward becoming active meaning-makers (Pereira, Í., Gil & Sylla, 2023). Through dramatization, learners not only practice linguistic structures but also situate language in meaningful, authentic contexts, thereby constructing new knowledge and developing communicative competence. This aligns with Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in mediating language learning and motivating learners to extend their zone of proximal development.

Student motivation is also closely linked to engagement with enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences. Guilloteaux & Dörnyei (2008) assert that motivation in second language learning is sustained when learners perceive tasks as relevant, enjoyable, and socially interactive. In this case, role-play activities serve as a motivational driver by combining creativity, collaboration, and real-life language use. Previous research by Tilaar & Nugroho (2008); Nugroho (2021) also supports this, showing that role-play in English classrooms increases both participation and confidence among learners, particularly in primary-level contexts.

Furthermore, engagement in role-play not only stimulates cognitive involvement but also enhances emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning. Fredricks et al., (2004) conceptualize engagement as multidimensional, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The observed enthusiasm reflects emotional engagement, while active participation in role-play demonstrates behavioral engagement. Together, these elements contribute to a supportive classroom atmosphere where students feel motivated to experiment with language and co-construct meaning with peers.

The findings correspond with earlier studies on multimodal learning (Midgette et al., 2023; I. Atsani & Damayanti, 2022; Mills & Exley, 2014) yet diverge by highlighting the unique realities

of Indonesian primary classrooms, particularly the constraints of technology and teacher background. This study extends prior work by integrating both pedagogical practices and structural challenges, offering a more holistic account of multiliteracy implementation in low-resource contexts.

Moreover, this study offers some contributions. It provides empirical evidence on multiliteracy practices in Indonesian primary schools, a setting underrepresented in current literature. It also demonstrates how classroom teachers who are not English specialists adapt multimodal and socio-constructivist strategies within curricular limitations. It integrates multiliteracy theory, socio-constructivism, and linguistic interdependence to explain both strengths and barriers in implementation. The novelty lies in revealing how teachers negotiate multiliteracy demands while simultaneously managing their own linguistic limitations, infrastructural constraints, and diverse student backgrounds.

Conclusion

This study explored how primary classroom teachers implemented multiliteracy in English language teaching and the challenges they encountered. The findings reveal that teachers integrated multimodal media such as pictures, songs, videos, and mobile devices to enhance engagement and meaning-making. They also employed diverse teaching methods, including translation, lectures, games, and role-play, which reflect adaptive and socio-constructivist approaches to accommodate learners' needs. Additionally, teachers adapted materials to students' abilities and cultural contexts, demonstrating flexibility in practice. Despite these creative strategies, several challenges persisted. Teachers struggled with students' limited proficiency in Indonesian and English, inadequate school facilities, poor internet connectivity, and mismatches between their academic background and teaching assignments. Nevertheless, students consistently showed enthusiasm and motivation when exposed to interactive and multimodal activities, particularly role-play, which fostered active participation and deeper engagement.

Reference

- Almusharraf, N., & Engemann, J. (2020). Postsecondary instructors' perspectives on teaching English as a foreign language by means of a multimodal digital literacy approach. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 15(18), 86–107. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v15i18.15451>
- Alvermann, D. E., & Sanders, R. K. (2019). *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents' Lives*. Routledge.
- Caretti, A., & Marije, N. (2024). Assessing cognitive flexibility: quantitative insights into the impact of adaptive learning technologies in special education. *International Journal of Religion*, 5(10), 1040–1054. <https://doi.org/10.61707/phnszh92>

- Choi, J., & Yi, Y. (2016). Teachers' integration of multimodality into classroom practices for English language learners. *TESOL Journal*, 7(2), 304–327. <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1002/tesj.204>
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2020). *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2023). *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (6th ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2017). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 21(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Dewi, D., Hartono, R., Saleh, M., & Wahyuni, S. (2023). Incorporating multiliteracy pedagogy elements into efl speaking class through digital storytelling. *Issues in Language Studies*, 12(2), 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.33736/ils.5545.2023>
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 42(1), 55–77. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2008.tb00207.x>
- Guilloteaux, M. J., & Dörnyei, Z. (2008). Motivating language learners: A classroom-oriented investigation of the effects of motivational strategies on student motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(1), 55–77. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2008.tb00207.x>
- Herdiawan, R., Rofi'i, A., Nurhidayat, E., & Fakhruddin, A. (2021). Sosialisasi pembelajaran bahasa inggris berbasis multiliteracies pada santri pondok raudlatul muhtadi'in cisambeng. *Bernas Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 2(4), 853–857. <https://doi.org/10.31949/jb.v2i4.1580>
- Hong, A., & Tan, K. (2020). A review of theories and practices of multiliteracies in classroom: issues and trends. *International Journal of Learning Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(11), 41–52. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.11.3>
- I. Atsani, & Damayanti, I. (2022). Teaching narrative texts in young learners' classroom during pandemic covid-19: an analysis from a multiliteracies perspective. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, 22(3), 326–342. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpp.v22i3.54122>
- Kraatz, E., Nagpal, M., Lin, T. J., Hsieh, M. Y., Ha, S. Y., Kim, S., & Shin, S. (2020). Teacher scaffolding of social and intellectual collaboration in small groups: A comparative case study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.587058>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.
- Maureen Walsh. (2010). Multimodal literacy: What does it mean for classroom practice? *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 33(3), 211–239.
- Midgette, K., Stewart, O., & Gonzales, J. (2023). Teaching with multimodal texts through a critical literacy lens within an english as a foreign language classroom context. *English and American Studies*, 20, 101–109. <https://doi.org/10.15421/382313>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Analisis Data Kualitatif*. Universitas Indonesia (UI-Press).
- Mills, K. A., & Exley, B. (2014). Time, space, and text in the elementary school digital writing classroom. *Written Communication*, 31(4), 434–469. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07410883145427>
- Nugroho, A. (2021). Learners' willingness to communicate in a foreign language: the role of informal digital learning of english. *Ele Reviews English Language Education Reviews*, 1(2), 125–133. <https://doi.org/10.22515/ele-reviews.v1i2.4396>
- Pereira, Í., Gil, M., & Sylla, C. (2023). No Title. *Comunicação E Sociedade*, 43. [https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.43\(2023\).4481](https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.43(2023).4481)
- Putri, R. D. P., & Maryani, I. (2021). Implementasi gerakan literasi sekolah ditinjau dari tahap pengembangan di SD muhammadiyah. *Metodik Didaktik: Jurnal Pendidikan Ke-SD-An*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.17509/md.v16i2.21732>
- Rowse, J., & Walsh, M. (2011). Rethinking literacy education in new times: Multimodality,

- multiliteracies & new literacies. *Brock Education: A Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 21(1), 53–62. <https://doi.org/10.26522/brocked.v21i1.236>
- Selayani, D., & Bayu, I. (2023). *Multiliterasi dalam pembelajaran abad 21*. Alfabeta.
- Sukma, E., Ramadhan, S., Aldiyah, M. P., & Sihes, A. J. (2023). Challenges in Implementing Indonesian Language Teaching Materials in Elementary Schools. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 16(2), 225–237. <https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2024.327>
- Sulistiyo, G. H. (2016). English language teaching and EFL teacher competence in Indonesia. *Proceedings of the Fourth International Seminar on English Language and Teaching (ISELT-4)*, 396–406.
- Tilaar, H. A. ., & Nugroho, R. (2008). *Kebijakan Pendidikan*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wahyono, P., Husamah, H., & Budi, A. S. (2020). 21st century learning in rural areas: Constraints and opportunities. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(2), 357–376. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2020.13225a>
- Zhang, D., & Zou, Y. (2020). Fostering multiliteracies through blended EFL learning. *Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT)*. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.2.5>