

Improving English In Riyadh Schools through Multimodal Learning and Student Engagement

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Abstract

One of the most important aspects of school is learning methodologies. However, a number of teaching methods have not changed over time in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), impeding meaningful advancement. Few studies have been done on improving teaching strategies in Riyadh, especially in international schools at the upper secondary level. By assessing existing teaching strategies in English classes at the higher secondary level in Riyadh using metrics like student engagement and English competency, this study seeks to close that gap. Due to the lack of MLS use in Riyadh schools, the assessment's goal is to identify potential strengths and weaknesses of the current learning scenario in order to achieve the necessary improvement of English proficiency, which is connected to one of KSA Vision 2030 objectives in the education sector. Higher secondary teachers in Riyadh's international schools made up the study's population as a whole, and data was gathered using questionnaires. The study's research design is a correlational survey study using a quantitative research approach. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used. The results demonstrate that while MLS use increased students' interest, inventiveness, and involvement in English classes, its absence had a detrimental impact on their English competence. English teachers, educational planners, and textbook developers can incorporate several MLS modes because of this research's important significance in determining students' engagement and English competency.

Keywords: Learning Methodologies, MLS, Higher Secondary Level, Riyadh Schools, English Proficiency

Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presents a significant difficulty in an era where education must adapt quickly to satisfy demands from around the world: many teaching strategies are still in use, which limits students' ability to succeed in a competitive environment. This is particularly noticeable in Riyadh's foreign schools' upper secondary English classrooms, where creative teaching methods are desperately needed yet never used. By examining how Multimodal Learning Strategies (MLS) might revolutionize English language instruction and increase student engagement, creativity, and competency, this study brings attention to this underappreciated field. Since Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 places a strong emphasis on

education as a means of advancing the country, it is not only pertinent but also crucial to comprehend and improve these teaching strategies. The project intends to close this gap and open the door for significant advancements that have an impact much beyond the confines of the classroom.

A move toward more dynamic, learner-centered approaches in the classroom of the twenty-first century has led to the emergence of Multimodal Learning Strategies (MLS) as a crucial component of contemporary educational practices. Even while MLS have long been discussed in pedagogical contexts, their use has become more significant as educational systems worldwide strive to accommodate a variety of learning styles and adopt new technologies. These approaches, which are characterized by their utilization of numerous sensory modalities and instructional techniques to improve learning, have been specially modified for application in a variety of educational situations across the globe. Many nations' educational institutions have started using MLS into their curricula after realizing the significant advantages they provide in enhancing student learning outcomes and teacher efficacy.

An increasing amount of research has shown how beneficial MLS are for the educational process. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that these tactics not only raise academic achievement and student engagement but also enable educators to use more creative, inclusive, and adaptable teaching methods (Chen & Jamiat, 2023). MLS are a promising trend in modern education because of the benefits seen for both teachers and students.

At the same time, English has become the most widely used language in the world for communication, bridging national and cultural divides. It is essential for promoting cross-cultural understanding, international dialogue, and international cooperation. English has a significant impact on important fields including business, education, and economics, where fluency in the language is frequently seen as a need for both academic and professional success (Oanh, Tien, & Quyet, 2023). As a result, many nations—particularly those in the East—have realized how strategically important it is to improve English language instruction in their own educational systems.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has become a nation that is firmly devoted to educational reform and development in this global environment. A key component of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, a strategy framework designed to diversify the economy and get Saudis ready for a knowledge-based society, is education. The nation has prioritized raising educational standards, boosting English language competency, and using contemporary teaching strategies in its educational systems as part of this objective.

The explosive growth of international schools in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, in recent years has been one of the most noticeable changes in education. Being the nation's political and economic center, Riyadh has seen a significant increase in the number of educational institutions offering internationally-aligned curricula, including instruction in English. These educational institutions have emerged as hubs for innovation in education and are regarded as possible prototypes for more extensive national reforms. Therefore, studying their teaching strategies—especially in the area of English language instruction—offers important insights on how well the nation is doing in terms of achieving its educational objectives.

The researcher found a significant lack in the literature about the use of MLS in English language instruction in Riyadh's international secondary schools, despite the increased interest in creative teaching techniques. Few researches have examined the use of MLS in the unique cultural and educational setting of Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that numerous foreign studies have emphasized the advantages of MLS in raising student performance, motivation, and creativity. Empirical studies that look at how MLS affect students' involvement and English language ability at the higher secondary level are especially rare.

By investigating the incorporation of MLS in English classes in international schools throughout Riyadh, this study aims to close this gap. Based on earlier research that highlights the value of integrating several instructional variables, including language proficiency, learning environment, and student involvement, the current study attempts to identify and assess the effects of these elements in the Saudi context. In addition to identifying potential obstacles and opportunities for their wider adoption, the objective is to get a deeper understanding of how MLS might be used to produce noticeable advances in English language instruction.

The study started by charting the evolution of English language instruction in Saudi Arabia in order to establish a thorough framework. An examination of the phases that have molded English education in the nation, the causes of its quick integration into school curriculum, and the larger socioeconomic factors that have impacted this development are all included in this. The governmental policies and changes that have promoted the integration of English as a vital skill for the workforce of the future will receive particular focus.

After providing this context, the study explored the educational value of MLS and how they may be used to solve contemporary issues in English teaching. It will investigate the ways in which Riyadh secondary school instructors are (or are not) implementing these tactics and evaluate how well they work to stimulate student interest, boost creativity, and eventually improve English competence. The study aims to solve and presents the research factors that are being examined, such as language proficiency and student participation.

Furthermore, the study's prospective contributions to the field of education in Saudi Arabia underscore its significance. The purpose of this study is to provide useful suggestions for educators, curriculum designers, and legislators by highlighting the advantages of MLS and their contribution to accomplishing the educational goals of Vision 2030. It emphasizes how crucial it is to provide educators with cutting-edge teaching resources that meet local educational requirements as well as global best practices.

Background of the Study

In order to meet the unique needs of learners, multimodal learning strategies (MLS) offer a variety of learning modes, including visual, auditory, kinesthetic, verbal, logical, and digital. Due to their capacity to enhance learning results and student engagement, these tactics have drawn more and more attention in international educational systems. MLS are still underutilized in many Saudi Arabian educational institutions, especially secondary schools in Riyadh, despite their acknowledged advantages (Afnan, 2023).

The purpose of this study is to present and highlight the value of MLS in English language instruction, with a particular emphasis on how they improve student engagement and English competence in secondary schools in Riyadh. Even though MLS adoption has been steadily growing, new research (Alghamdi, 2024) indicates that many institutions continue to use traditional teaching methods, which restricts students' ability to interact with the material in meaningful and customized ways. This is especially crucial when learning English as a second language, as linguistic and cultural disparities frequently cause learners to struggle with fluency and comprehension.

Key elements that jointly support the effective implementation of MLS are highlighted in the study, including teacher practices, technological integration, contextual considerations, and student participation. It emphasizes how these elements interact and affect students' capacity to successfully learn English. According to Ouhaichi et al. (2023), for example, MLS can encourage students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement by using strategies including digital storytelling, visual aids, peer collaboration, and interactive learning tools. Videos, role-plays, and interactive whiteboards are examples of tools that have been shown to make difficult subjects easier to understand and foster a more lively and welcoming learning environment.

Additionally, the integration of MLS has a solid base thanks to technology improvements. Multimedia technologies, educational software, and digital platforms help teachers adapt their lessons to different learner preferences. Since Saudi Arabia strives for educational reform and technological advancement, it is imperative that these policies be in line with Vision 2030. Incorporating MLS into this process provides a potent way to foster language learning, creativity, and critical thinking.

Research also shows how crucial student participation is to mastering a language. For example, Albahouth (2024) highlights the use of flipped classroom pedagogy, in which students participate in interactive activities during class and connect with multimedia content prior to class. This methodology has been demonstrated to greatly increase learner engagement and comprehension and is intrinsically dependent on MLS. Similarly, Alharbi (2024) shows how MLS-related motivating factors can help EFL learners overcome obstacles like Arabic and English phonetic disparities.

Additionally, teachers are essential to the execution of MLS. Students' confidence, originality, and written performance improved when high school teachers used digital multimodal composition and visual aids, as demonstrated by Abdelhalim (2024) and Khasawneh (2024). The benefits are especially noticeable for kids who struggle with learning disorders like dyslexia, where multimodal techniques fill in communication and cognitive gaps.

The way that English is taught in Saudi Arabia has changed dramatically over time. Due to the prevalence of conventional teaching techniques like the grammar-translation approach, it remained neglected despite being offered for the first time in the 1920s (Al-Seghayer, 2014). A revolution in English language instruction is advocated by recent research (Assulaimani, 2019), which includes widening exposure to native English surroundings, improving teacher preparation, and incorporating information and communication technology (ICT). These

suggestions support Vision 2030's objectives, which place a strong emphasis on innovation and digital transformation in the field of education.

Given these advancements, the current study aims to close a discernible research gap by investigating the systematic implementation of MLS in English lessons in international secondary schools in Riyadh. It offers a thorough analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of this strategy, with useful ramifications for curriculum designers, educators, and legislators.

In the end, this study confirms that MLS are both a required and a progressive teaching technique. A more inclusive and productive learning environment, increased student engagement, and enhanced English proficiency can result from their integration. These results support the creation of a more creative, learner-centered national curriculum and are consistent with Saudi Arabia's larger educational goals.

Problem Statement

Recent difficulties in Saudi Arabia's EFL context emphasize the necessity of contemporary teaching strategies. Teachers must use cutting-edge pedagogical strategies to improve classroom engagement since they are important forces behind educational advancement. This study investigates how teaching-related problems impact the process of learning.

Unfair assessments result from the fact that many EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia continue to use antiquated assessment techniques that are incompatible with multimodal learning strategies (MLS) (Beck et al., 2023). Although resistance to change persists, contemporary solutions such as E-Reader software can enhance student engagement and tailor content (Almusharraf et al., 2020) (Onu et al., 2024). More flexible assessments may be possible with the development of AI tools (Koraishi, 2023), while worries regarding abuse are still present (Halaweh, 2023). In order to promote equitable, inspiring, and productive learning environments, evaluation procedures must be updated.

In Saudi education, "Resistance to Change" is a significant obstacle to the adoption of multimodal learning strategies (MLS). Many educators continue to use outdated approaches, which hinders students' ability to think critically and participate in class (Alshammari, 2022; Nazarova, 2025). This resistance to adopting contemporary teaching resources results in passive learning settings where educators continue to employ cliched techniques, impeding students' academic advancement (Lina & Arshad, 2024).

Research shows that the absence of multimodal learning strategies (MLS) in Saudi high schools has an impact on the competency of EFL students (Abdulaal et al., 2023). While students exposed to MLS understand the value of technology and communication in the learning process, those exposed to traditional techniques rely on textbooks. This change emphasizes how important it is for MLS to address negative attitudes and enhance language learning. The importance of MLS in improving English proficiency in Saudi schools is highlighted by similar findings by Alzighaibi (2024) and Alsmari (2024).

Research Questions

The following research questions are intended to be addressed by the study:

- (a) What is the relationship between multimodal learning strategies used by secondary school teachers and students' English proficiency in Riyadh?
- (b) What is the role of student engagement as a mediating factor in the effectiveness of multimodal learning strategies?
- (c) What are the multimodal learning approaches that influence levels of student engagement in English language learning?

Literature Review

Due to the need for English competence in a variety of industries, MLS is an essential digital tool in Saudi Arabia, particularly for English Language Learning (ELL). English is essential for communication as part of Vision 2030, especially in Riyadh, where international events draw people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition to giving young people employment chances, this emphasizes how important fluency in English is for efficient communication in the workplace (Al-Mwzaiji et al., 2023).

The significance of models in ELA (English Language Acquisition), where student-teacher interaction is crucial, as shown by research by VanPatten et al. (2020). Reading, writing, and listening are among the skills that are improved by models. Although Multimodal Learning Approaches (MMLA) have advantages, further research is required to increase their application in education, according to Giannakos & Cukurova (2023).

Since the 1990s, e-learning has developed in Saudi Arabia in line with the objectives of Vision 2030, which aims to change education. To accomplish the goals of the vision, this shift necessitates strong EFL competencies, highlighting the significance of concentrating on the education sector (Al-Mwzaiji et al., 2023).

MLSs and Kolb's experiential learning theory increase student engagement and improve English proficiency through speech and visual modalities (Hashim et al., 2022). Mayer's multimedia learning theory has changed throughout the last forty years, focusing on the effectiveness of learning through the use of both words and images (Mayer, 2024). The necessity for education to adapt to students' changing competencies is highlighted by this change. Mayer's theory supports the use of MLS in instruction and has shown efficacy across age ranges.

Significance of the Study

By tackling important issues in EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia, this study seeks to close the gap between theory and practice. First, using Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (1990) as a guide, it assists policymakers in transforming traditional textbooks into interactive digital versions. Activities and games in digital resources can facilitate learning and increase student engagement. Furthermore, by encouraging the application of diverse teaching techniques grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1980), the study helps educators. By employing multimodal learning strategies (MLS), this aids teachers in meeting the varied needs of their students and enhancing classroom efficiency. Therefore, the study emphasizes the value of MLS in EFL classes, particularly in secondary schools in Riyadh. It

demonstrates how MLS can improve English teaching and learning outcomes in accordance with Vision 2030 goals by looking at the impact of several educational variables.

Review of Related Studies

A substantial majority of students prefer visual learning modes, according to Mustafa et al.'s (2024) analysis of student preferences on various learning styles. These comprise teaching resources that are essential components of multimodal learning strategies (MLS), such as PowerPoint presentations, movies, and other graphic-based content. According to the study, visual learners are more likely to do well because they look for methods that combine acquiring new information with in-depth comprehension, which improves learning outcomes and engagement. This supports the notion that by establishing a dynamic, multisensory learning environment, MLS integration can satisfy the various demands of pupils.

Salamanti et al. (2023) examined the distinctions between traditional and modern language teaching approaches in a related study. Two groups of students—one taught using standard methods and the other utilizing multimodal strategies—were given the Oxford Quick Placement Test by the researchers. The results showed that, particularly in EFL and ESL environments, students who were taught by MLS showed improved language performance, preparedness, and flexibility. This demonstrates how contemporary, varied teaching methods directly affect students' motivation and language development.

Almashy et al. (2025) offer more proof, highlighting the benefits of MLS integration for English language acquisition, especially for improving speaking fluency and grammar competency. These abilities are essential for students' academic performance as well as their future success in the workplace. MLS foster students' critical thinking, communication, and self-expression by introducing them to a variety of teaching modalities, which eventually aids in their personal development and boosts their self-esteem.

On the other hand, students are restricted to a limited range of instructional practices when traditional teaching methods are used, which can stifle creativity and limit opportunities for active learning. Additionally, it might impair pupils' capacity for critical thought and effective self-expression in authentic contexts. In order to improve language competency and develop well-rounded people who are prepared for the demands of contemporary schooling and a variety of professional choices, it is evident from this expanding body of research that multimodal tactics should be incorporated into EFL classes.

Research Method

For this study, the researcher used a correlational survey design. Surveys are useful instruments for gathering trustworthy data that bolsters the validity of study findings, as Nardi (2018) highlights. The researcher collected quantitative data and produced precise statistics that answer the questions and goals of the study. Nardi also emphasizes how surveys may be used to introduce fresh perspectives and methods into the setting of research. Additionally, correlational investigations are useful for evaluating the link between variables and determining which variables positively affect others as claimed by Privitera (2024). To get precise, data-driven insights, this study uses a quantitative research approach. A questionnaire that successfully submitted to receive responses from a sample of teachers to gather data, enabling the researcher to extrapolate findings to the Saudi educational system.

According to Mishra and Alok (2022), quantitative research is a dependable technique for recording genuine responses and bolstering the goals of the study as it is based on numerical data and statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

According to the study's findings, teachers strongly endorse the use of multimodal learning methodologies when teaching English. A high mean score of 4.47 indicated substantial agreement among the 360 respondents (240 female and 120 male teachers) regarding the efficacy of these tactics in improving teaching outcomes. With a mean score of 4.38, student involvement also garnered high scores, indicating that teachers consider it a critical component of learning achievement. With a mean score of 4.27 for English competence, the strategies were once more positively correlated, suggesting that multimodal approaches are thought to be helpful for enhancing language ability. These findings support the necessity of including multimodal learning strategies into instructional practices by highlighting the important role they play in encouraging both active student involvement and language competency.

Research Question 1

The highest percentage between 51.7% and 41.7% assured that speech can trigger students' interest and curiosity to the material. While other percentages between 52.5% and of 55.8 % proved that verbal expression and facial expression can affect positively on students. Additionally, the use of graphics that can assist the teacher to explain about a certain concept got 50.8% for "strongly agree "to prove that visual tools like graphics which is one type of MLSs is essential to aid English teachers to explain some complicated concepts. On the other side, the percentage of 65.8% for" strongly agree' 'reflected the importance of using pictures and photographs because they can help the students to understand the language learning. Furthermore, the percentages for 61% and 63% agreed strongly that animations and videos entertain and sensitize students to learn effectively. Consequently, it was obvious that there was a strong relationship between using various types of MLS and English proficiency. The following chart reflects visually the highest percentages of respondents to answer accurately RQ1: What is the relationship between multimodal learning strategies used by secondary school teachers and students' English proficiency in Riyadh?

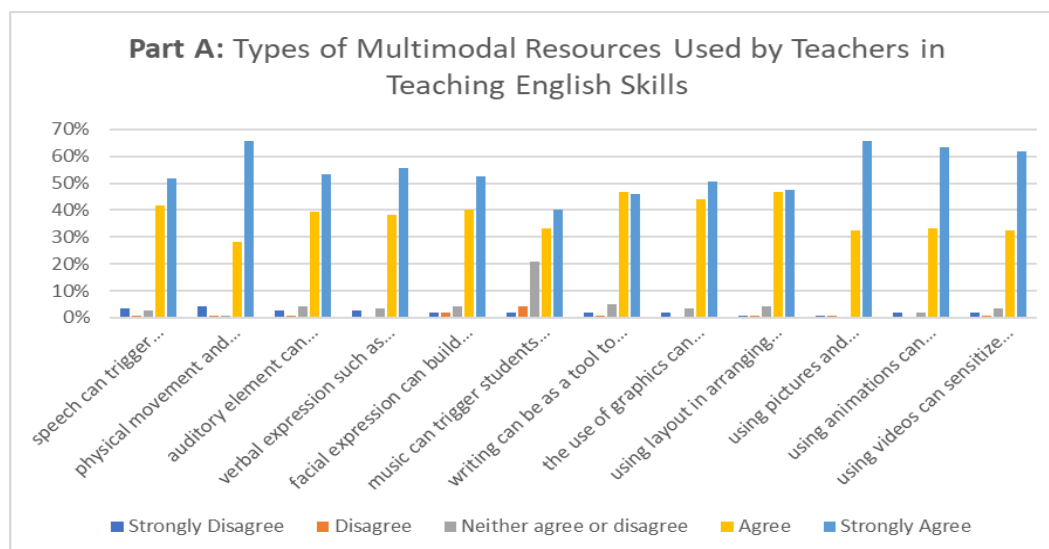


Chart 2-P.A-Types of Multimodal Resources Used by Teachers in Teaching English Skills(Section B)-25

Research Question 2

The percentages ranged from 45.8% to 55.8% to behavioral engagement and the percentages ranged from 40% to 50% to affective engagement for "strongly agreed" while the percentages ranged from 41.7% to 51.7% to cognitive engagement. Thus, the highest percentage of 51.7% agreed that positive perception of teacher support (cognitive engagement) can influence the success of MLS since it reflects as a factor that influences student engagement. On the other side, the highest percentage of 50% strongly agreed that positive interactions (affective engagement) between students or between student and teacher can impact MLS success; as for the enthusiasm and interest interactions (affective engagement) which got 50% reflects the direct strong influence of students' behavior towards applying MLS successfully. Furthermore, the highest percentage of 53.3% agreed that effort (behavioral engagement) of students to interact, learn and being ready to exert any effort to accomplish the required tasks asked by their teachers contributes directly to the success of MLS. Moreover, the other high percentage of 55.8% for achievement (behavioral engagement) translates the efficient outcome that students can attain through using MLS in English class and motivate them to apply it widely and regularly.

The following chart reflects visually the highest percentages of respondents to answer accurately RQ2: What is the role of student engagement as a mediating factor in the effectiveness of multimodal learning strategies?

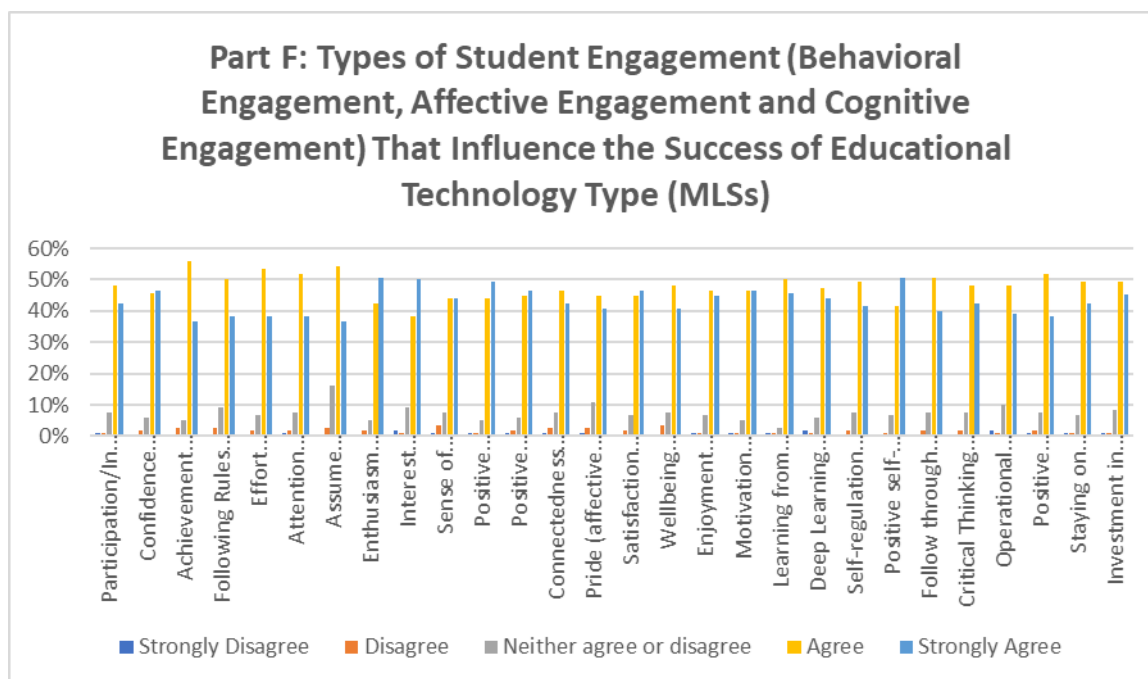


Chart 7-P. F-Types of Student Engagement (Section B)-25

Research Question 3

The highest percentage 57.7% strongly agree that multimodal pedagogy is involving creativity and higher cognitive skills. While 58.3% strongly agreed that multimodal pedagogy is engaging and motivating for content learning, the same percentage assured that it is fostering motivation too. Although 51.7% agreed that it is retaining and deepening content knowledge. All these high percentages of respondents for part B showed that the multimodal pedagogy is accepted by students and they are willing to learn in an innovative learning atmosphere which cannot be attained without the employment of MLS. Additionally, the highest percentages of respondents for part c proved that the variety of multimodal learning modes assisted student to be engaged and more excited to learn to prove his/her role as mediating factor to success the employment of MLS. The percentages ranged from 49% to 57% to reflect the entire acceptance that the use of auditory, visual, written and kinesthetic modes for instruction either one of them or some of them resulted positively on student to motivate him regularly.

The following charts reflect visually the highest percentages of respondents to answer accurately RQ3: What are the multimodal learning approaches that influence levels of student engagement in English language learning?

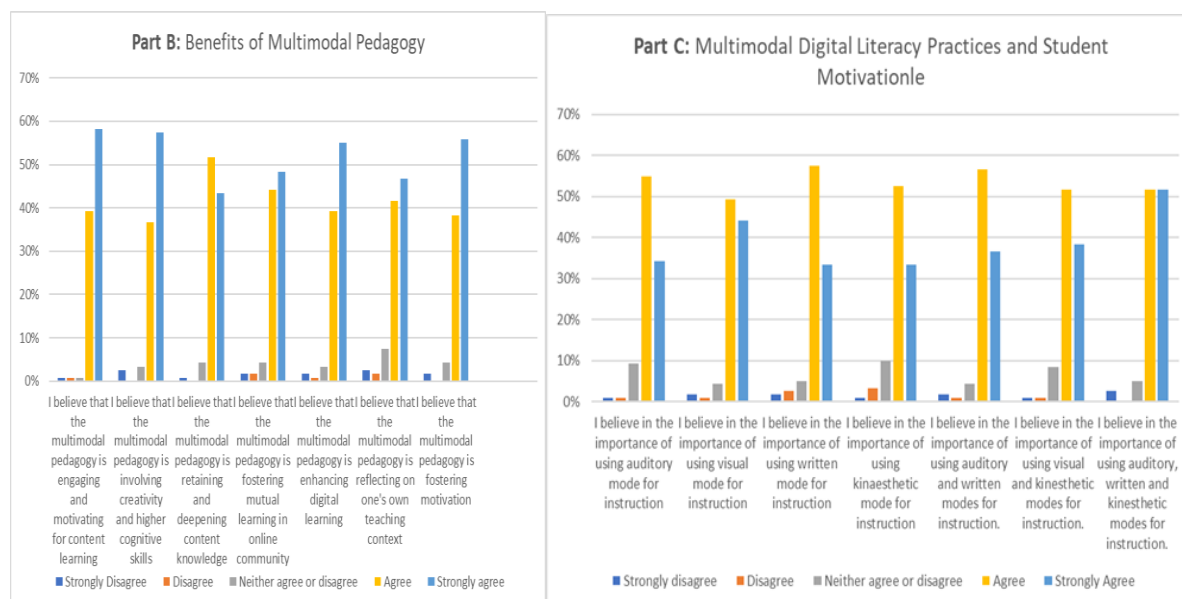


Chart 3-P.B-Benefits of Multimodal Pedagogy(Section B)-25 Chart 4-P.C-Multimodal Digital Literacy Practices and Student Motivation (Section B)-25

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, Multimodal Learning Strategies (MLS) are essential for improving English language instruction in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. Instructors overwhelmingly concur that MLSs are beneficial for raising student interest and enhancing English language skills. The high mean scores for strategy effectiveness, student engagement, and language proficiency—4.47, 4.38, and 4.27, respectively—indicate that MLS are consistently seen favorably. According to these results, a more dynamic and inclusive classroom setting may be produced by combining several learning modalities, including text, audio, visuals, and interactive tools, which will improve student learning outcomes.

Recommendations

It is highly advised that educational stakeholders in Riyadh, such as curriculum designers, school administrators, and policymakers, take proactive measures to support and execute the integration of Multimodal Learning Strategies (MLS) in secondary English language instruction in light of the study's findings. The findings unequivocally show that MLS greatly increase student engagement and English language proficiency, two things that are critical for academic performance and skill development in the learning environment of the twenty-first century. To accommodate the varied learning styles and cognitive requirements of students in Riyadh's classrooms, the current curriculum should be updated to include a variety of material delivery methods, including digital texts, films, infographics, audio recordings, and interactive presentations. Programs for ongoing professional development that not only present the theoretical underpinnings of multimodality but also offer hands-on instruction in the effective design, implementation, and evaluation of multimodal activities are necessary to empower teachers. In order to guarantee that every student has equitable access to gadgets, internet connectivity, and contemporary learning resources necessary for multimodal engagement, schools around Riyadh should also make investments in modernizing their technology infrastructure.

Furthermore, by implementing cutting-edge evaluation techniques that complement MLS-based training, it is imperative to reevaluate the conventional standards of assessment. These techniques ought to make it possible to evaluate students' linguistic proficiency, creativity, and critical thinking in a more flexible and thorough manner. Students' autonomy and motivation to interact with the English language will be increased by promoting a change from teacher-centered instruction to a more participatory and student-centered classroom dynamic. To guarantee that the tactics are used successfully and sustainably, school administration and local education authorities should also keep an eye on and assist with the implementation of MLS through organized oversight and feedback systems. As Riyadh continues to be essential to achieving Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 objectives, particularly in the fields of global communication, innovation, and education; adopting MLSs can be a game-changing strategy that not only updates English language instruction but also equips learners to succeed in multilingual and multicultural environments. Finally, in order to assess the long-term effects of MLSs on language acquisition and to further investigate optimal practices for broad adoption in secondary schools, more research should be supported in Riyadh's educational system.

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