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**Assist. Prof. Dr. Kawa Abdulkareem Sherwani**

Erbil Technical Administrative College Erbil  
Polytechnic University, Erbil

**Dr. Mohammad Kiani Harchegani**

Salahadin University, College of Languages,

\* Corresponding author: E-mail :  
**Mohammad.kiani@knu.edu.iq**

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**The Impact of Multimodal Discourse Analysis on the Improvement of Iraqi EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Skill**

**A B S T R A C T**

The present study was conducted to investigate the impact of multimodal discourse on Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill. To achieve the goal, a group including 40 Iraqi EFL learners participated in the free Reading Comprehension course based on their scores in a Placement Test. Selected participants were randomly assigned to control (N=20) and experimental (N=20) groups. Prior to the start of the course, both groups were given the pretest (reading comprehension test). The two groups received the same language instruction, but the experimental group was exposed to multimodal treatment (multimodal use of discourse, e.g. video and picture based on Halliday's social semiotics approach) while the control one did not receive any multimodal treatment. Having accomplished the experiment, participants of the two groups completed two reading comprehension tasks as the posttest. Results of t-test indicate significant outperformance of the experimental group over the control one.

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"تأثير تحليل الخطاب متعدد الوسائط على تحسين مهارة الفهم القرائي لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية"

أ.م.د كاوة عبد الكريم شيرواني / الكلية التقنية الادارية أربيل / جامعة أربيل التقنية

د. محمد كيانى هرتشجانى / جامعة صلاح الدين / كلية اللغات

**الخلاصة:**

أجريت هذه الدراسة للتحقيق في تأثير الخطاب متعدد الوسائط على مهارة فهم القراءة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ولتحقيق الهدف ، قامت مجموعة تضم اربعين شخص شارك دارسو اللغة

الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في دورة الفهم القرائي المجانية بناءً على درجاتهم في اختبار تحديد المستوى. تم تعيين المشاركين المختارين عشوائياً لمجموعتين (N = 20) وتجريبية (N = 20) قبل بدء الدورة ، كانت كلتا المجموعتين أعطيت الاختبار الاولي (اختبار الفهم القرائي). تلقت المجموعتان نفس تعليم اللغة ، لكن المجموعة التجريبية تعرضت للعلاج متعدد الوسائط (استخدام متعدد الوسائط للخطاب ، مثل الفيديو والصورة بناءً على منهج Halliday السيميائية الاجتماعية) بينما لم تتلق المجموعة الاخرى أي علاج متعدد الوسائط بعد الانتهاء من التجربة ، المشاركين من المجموعتين أكملوا مهمتي فهم القراءة كاختبار لاحق. تشير نتائج اختبار t إلى تفوق معنوي في أداء المجموعة التجريبية على المجموعة الضابطة . الكلمات الرئيسية: الخطاب متعدد الوسائط ، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، مهارة الفهم القرائي

## 1. Introduction:

Multi-modal Discourse Analysis is a method based on systemic functional linguistics which uses multimodality. It is a group of research papers in the field of multimodality and these papers are concerned with developing the theory and practice of the analysis of discourse and make use of multiple semiotic resources; for example, visual pictures, language, architecture and space. New community semiotic backgrounds are offered for the analysis of a range of discourse categories in print media, dynamic and static electronic media and three-dimensional objects in space. The theoretical method notifying these research efforts is Michael Halliday's (1994) systemic practical theory of language which is protracted to other semiotic resources and backgrounds.

In language teaching, one of the main standards to measure the teaching effect is the adequate and effective communication between teachers and learners to achieve the communicative purpose. Multimodal discourse is not restricted to the written text but extended to other forms of expressions such as sounds, pictures, colors, and cartoons while discourse analysis suggested by Harris analyzes the internal consistencies of discourse activities, and the relationships between them and mental modes. (Harris, 1952, quoted in Zhu, 2007), which has become the application of researches both within and outside Iraq. Therefore, observing the need to fill the research gap regarding the role of multimodal discourse in improvement of Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill in the context of Iraq, this study aimed at investigating whether multimodal discourse had any significant impacts on reinforcing Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill. This study also aimed at investigating whether there was a significant difference in utilizing multimodal discourse for male and female improvement of the Iraqi EFL learners'.

### 1.1. Statement of the problem

A vast majority of native and non-native English speakers feel disappointed for being unable to get the core ideas and the messages implied in conversational exchanges in their favorite books as well as the times undertaking a reading comprehension task. There are multiple cases

of people who can fathom out the language and linguistic elements, but still have difficulties in understanding the events in reading passages or performing a professional reading comprehension activity. Moreover, the feasibility and efficiency of Multimodal Discourse model in improving reading comprehension skill of Iraqi EFL learners has never been investigated by any researcher and no solid study has been carried out about the prevalent and influential modes in EFL settings for the learners to depend on, reinforcing their reading comprehension skill.

### **1.2. The purpose of the study:**

This study seeks to investigate the impact of multimodal discourse on Iraqi EFL Learners' reading comprehension skill and investigate whether linguistic and non-linguistic modes such as videos, tape recorder, picture and light have any significant impact on the improvement of Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill.

Using an experimental approach this study aims to:

Theoretically discuss and challenge the theory of multimodal discourse analysis to diagnose any related gaps and shortcomings regarding the application of the model in the EFL settings. Put the theory of multimodal discourse into practice, using the model in EFL classes, to investigate its impact on Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill. Investigate the possible difference among male and female EFL learner in developing reading comprehension skill utilizing multimodal discourse.

### **1.3. Research Questions:**

This study tries to answer the following questions:

**R.Q1:** Does multimodal discourse have any significant impact on the improvement of Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill?

**R.Q2:** Can multimodal discourse-based teaching improve Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill?

### **1.4. Data and Method:**

This study is experimental and quantitative research. The data analyzed, completed the (25.0) version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Accordingly, Mann Whitney Test, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, Independent-Samples T-Test, and Paired Samples T-Test were estimated based on the results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test that made clear the normality and non-normality of the data. Moreover, the researcher applied descriptive statistic of the data. In knowledge to analyze the data, SPSS software was used to assess descriptive and inferential statistics. A set of T-test was carried on to identify different

relationships.

### **1.5. Scope of the study:**

The multimodal discourse analysis theory stresses the use of pictures, audios, and videos, etc., to enable learners to more deeply comprehend what they have learned. It can also reinforce the learner's learning efficacy through the use of their sense organs. The practice of multimodal discourse analysis theory in the College English teaching can clearly instigate the learner's learning interest and better teaching efficiency in the class. Learners, teachers, administrators and curriculum designers respectively could benefit from the results of this research. This article is focused on the multimodal use of discourse in teaching reading comprehension skills to Iraqi EFL learners and the researcher has investigated the impact of various modes like images, videos, audios..., on the development of reading comprehension skills.

### **1.6 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

One of the limitations of this study was that the focus of the researcher was on investigation into the reading comprehension skill. In fact, the researcher did not intend to study other linguistic skills other than reading comprehension skill. Also in terms of time and place setting, the researcher had to carry out this study in two universities which were representative of Iraqi universities due to financial and budget issues. Also the researcher had the limitation of conducting the research only on intermediate level students. And therefore those students whose language level was advanced or elementary levels were excluded from this research. Also due to financial problems, the researcher had to carry out this study on 80 participants.

### **1.7. Significance of the study:**

Multimodal discourse theory stresses the use of audios, pictures, and videos, etc. to enable learners to deeply understand what they have learned. It can also improve the learner's learning efficiency through the use of their sense organs. The application of multimodal discourse theory in the College English teaching can obviously arouse the learner's study interest and improve the teaching efficiency in the class.

Besides contributing to the general field of multimodal discourse, the study aims to develop a type of comprehensive multimodal discourse in teaching reading and reading comprehension skill in EFL environments that could also be applicable to other types of discourses, thus useful for linguists, EFL teachers, language learners, journalists and other specialists involved in any types of multimodal discourse in English language.

The multimodal discourse analysis theory emphasizes the use of pictures, audios, and videos, etc., to enable students to more deeply understand what they have learned. It can also improve the students' learning efficiency through the use of their sense

organs. The application of multimodal discourse analysis theory in the English teaching can obviously arouse the students' learning interest and enhance the teaching efficiency in the class.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1. Theoretical Background**

Multimodal discourse analysis describes a various range of approaches for studying how social actors create meaning and how social actors interact with other social actors and their environments. Because of the variety of approaches, there are no introductory texts that are able to explore all approaches. Jewitt 2014 provides a collection of dimensions on multimodality involving work in thematic areas and case studies. Jewitt, et al. 2016 introduces some of the main approaches to multimodality concentrating on Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Social Semiotics, and Multimodal-Type Conversation Analysis. That book is useful for students and graduate students and highlights approaches building on SFL and CA. Norris and Maier 2014 is another useful text covering a range of approaches involving Multimodal (Inter) Action Analysis, Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Mediated Discourse Analysis, and Social Semiotics. Kress and van Leeuwen 2001 is a main work specifically on social semiotics, developing principles that can be applied across modes. For those interested in how texts, discourses, and objects mediate interactions, Scollon 2001 is a good starting point for introducing Mediated Discourse Analysis. Mediated discourse analysis takes action as necessary and regards how texts and objects mediated actions. Norris 2004 builds upon mediated discourse analysis to develop Multimodal (Inter) Action Analysis as a suite of methodological tools for analyzing multimodal interaction. Finally, Norris 2016 is a four-volume collection of work in multimodality, tracing historical developments starting in 1956.

Style in discourse is a very complex concept. As for phraseology, style is essential for analysis of phraseological units (PUs) in discourse to boost the role of PUs in creation of textual meanings. A context-oriented approach carries this meaning that stylistic changes do not occur in isolation, but only as an integrated part of discourse. Based on systemic functional grammar put forth by Halliday (2006), Zhang (2009) formed the theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis, which involves five levels: *Culture, Context, Meaning, Form and Media*.

In a paper titled *Application of Discourse Analysis In College Reading*, written by Wang Wenquan in 2009, the author asserted that it is pertinent to note that the text of reading material is not an isolated combination of words. Attention cannot be concentrated only on the syntactic and semantic analysis of the single words or sentences, but also as a communicative function. However, past studies indicate that most Chinese college students are able to fathom out the formal structures and

logical meaning material with an average of degree of complexity, within general and familiar topics, but they cannot understand the rhetorical and functional meanings of sentences, or sentences with specific topics or containing culture differences. The basic reason may be their lack of training in Discourse Analysis (DA) and ignorance of even the simplest DA techniques.

This paper focuses on English majors reading ability on the basis of reconsideration of reading from the viewpoint of cognitive psychology. In China, the National Curriculum for Majors issued by the Ministry of Education explicitly expresses the requirements of reading comprehension ability as the following:

1. To improve the ability of reading comprehension and reading speed;
2. To cultivate their logic ability of analyzing, inferring, inducing and deducing;
3. To improve their reading skills including skimming, scanning and referencing;
4. To enlarge students' vocabularies, getting linguistic and cultural background knowledge through reading practice (Douglas, 2001)

Concretely, students ought to be able to analyze the points of view, structure of the texts, linguistic features and figures of speech of the texts. They should be able to read a text of about 1,600 words quickly in 5 minutes and understand the theme and author's point of view, and grasp the facts and details discussed in the text. In order to strengthen the non

English majors' reading efficiency, the author put forth the DA approach, and takes it into practice in the teaching of reading to examine its effect.

## **2.2. Theory of Discourse Analysis:**

As we know, meaning is constructed in our minds. In the world of language learning and teaching, *constructivism* as a *theory of language learning and teaching* is of paramount importance. Constructivism is 'an approach to learning that holds the view that people actively construct or make and create their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner' (Elliott et al., 2000:256). In elaboration of constructivists' ideas, Arends (1998) points out that constructivism believes in personal construction of meaning by the learner through experience, and that meaning is affected by the interaction of prior knowledge and new events.

### **2.1.2. The Application of Discourse Analysis and Language learning:**

Language learners are faced with the monumental task of acquiring not only new vocabulary, syntactic patterns, and phonology, but also discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and interactional competence. Without knowing about and experiencing the discourse and sociocultural patterns of the target language, second or foreign language learners are probably to depend on the strategies and expectations acquired as part of their first language development,

which may be not appropriate for the second or foreign language setting and may lead to communication difficulties and misunderstandings. Therefore, learners should learn to make use of discourse analysis in comprehension. A huge volume of work reveals that we can effectively help students to improve their reading ability by using discourse analysis. The following approaches to comprehension rely on the discourse analysis.

### ***2.2.2. Multimodal critical discourse analysis***

In the late 1980s and 1990s Several authors who had been working in linguistics started to understand that meaning is ,in general, conveyed not only through language but also through other semiotic modes. A linguist might, for instance, be able to make a complete and revealing analysis of the language used in a commercial. But much of the meaning in this advertisement might be conveyed by visual features.

In Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) we would like to show how images, photographs, diagrams and graphics , as well, work to convey meaning, in each case explaining the choices made by the writer. We want to put these meanings next to those we have found in the accompanying texts. Both text and image can be regarded as being consisted of communicative choices by writers that want to do certain types of work for them. The job of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis is to identify and reveal these options through a careful process of description directed by the tools provided.

### ***2.3.2. Multimodal based-Teaching by Teachers***

The multimodal teaching refers to the full use of the multimode to access, receive, and transfer the information during some teaching procedures. That's to say, the teachers lay out the specific teaching procedures through the multimode and its combinations, such as words, pictures, audios, videos, PPTs, and Internet, etc., while students receive and cognize the messages by means of sense organs. So this kind of teaching is more challenging and teachers need to renovate the teaching concepts to guide the College English teaching. In order to achieve this type of teaching, the teachers need (1) to choose the proper teaching method for each teaching procedure and the appropriate teaching mode accordingly; (2) to design the teaching activities on the basis of student's character, such as the role playing, the drama performance and the argument, etc., to instigate their learning interest and develop the multimodal cognitive ability; (3) to take advantage of all the resources, especially the modern teaching media to simulate the real situation to enhance the teaching effect, such as the Internet, the videos and movie clips.

#### **2.4.2. Multimodal based-Learning by Students**

The multimodal learning refers to the student's cognitive ability to notice, analyze, and express the information through the multimode. It can be categorized into two kinds through the teacher's instructions and the student's self-learning. (1) Students learn the multimodal discourse expressions in the classroom. The teacher leads the student to acquiring and accessing the multimodal information and picking up the nonverbal information brought by teachers and other students quickly (Zhang, 2009). The students' first preference is to understand different symbols the teacher presents in the class and identify the relationship among these symbols and the whole significance between the modes such as images, characters colors, and motions, etc. Multimodal learning in the class also involves many teaching forms used by teachers which can help students experience the information expressions visually, audibly, etc., to develop their capacity to cope with the multimodal discourse information. (2) Students learn by themselves in the classroom or after class. It is meant that the students do the self-learning visually, audibly based on their own leaning level, learning methods and teaching requirement. First of all, the students make the learning plan by themselves and finish the tasks assigned by teachers or set by themselves on their own in the given time. Secondly, students should know the approach to accessing the resources and acquire the information through different ways to solve the learning problems during the process of self-learning (Gu, 2016). Finally, students learn the language in the natural and relaxing environment, and take advantage of the techniques to assist in the meaning construction, to know the potential meanings of each symbol, and finally utilize the symbols to present the meanings they want to express.

#### **2.5.2. Discourse Analysis-based Instruction and Reading Comprehension:**

Likewise, Eskey (2005) believes that in the EFL setting, reading might be an important language skill to be learned, since most learners of English might not really need to talk or listen to speakers of English in their daily lives, but may need to read in that language for different purposes. However, this apparently very important language skill also seems to be challenging. As Sellers (2000) asserts, the reading process is cognitively demanding because learners need to synchronize attention, perception, memory, and comprehension. Such cognitive demands make reading process inherently intricate and consequently one of the most difficult to develop at a high level of proficiency (Grabe, 2002). Consequently, providing efficient instructions that lead to the development of reading skill appears to be an educational priority for foreign language teachers. To date, many methods of reading instruction have been displayed by different experts among which discourse analysis approach has recently gained more attention; though not only in teaching reading skills, but also for all other dimensions of language teaching (McCarthy, 1991; Nunan, 2001). Indeed, discourse analysis has become a core field within linguistics

with a significant applied value for language teaching. The reason is that discourse analysis can be used to equip learners with competencies to understand language use in various communicative contexts in which they will be expected to operate outside the classroom (McCarthy, 1991; Cook, 1989).

### **2.6.2. Views of Scholars about Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is often envisaged as extracting meaning by the reader through involvement with the text. Nystrand (2006) believes that some researchers define reading comprehension as a function of a writer-reader 'contract' (e.g., Tierney, 1983; Tierney & Lazansky, 1980; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991, as cited in Nystrand, 2006) or "a dialogic exchange of meaning or transformation of mutual knowledge between writer and reader mediated by the text" (Nystrand, as cited in Nystrand, 2006, p. 397). Other work has explored socio-cultural dimensions of reading comprehension. Synthesizing research since the 1970s, the RAND Reading Study Group described reading comprehension as a cognitive process of "simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Snow, 2002, pp. 11-12) limited by the socio-cultural context of reading and experiences of the reader.

Richards and Schmidt (2002) describe reading skills (reading micro skills) as abilities required for skillful reading such as discriminating main ideas, understanding sequence, noticing specific details, making inferences, making comparison, and making prediction. However, Nunan (2003) holds that reading is a fluent process in which readers integrate the information from a text with their own background knowledge to build meaning. He divides reading to strategic reading and fluent reading. Strategic reading is described as the ability of the reader to use an array of reading strategies to accomplish a purpose for reading. Moreover, He believes that good readers know what to do when they are faced with difficulties and regards fluent reading as the ability to read at an appropriate rate with enough comprehension. In such a view, meaning does not lie in the reader nor does it rest in the text. The reader's background knowledge integrates with the text to construct the meaning. The text, the reader, fluency, and strategies combined together thence, define the act of reading.

However, researchers like Elder and Paul (2002) envisaged reading as extracting and internalizing meaning implicit in a text. This view, unlike the one taken by Nunan (2003), considers meaning to reside in the text and reading consequently, becomes the attempt to extract and understand the already existing meaning. Quite similarly, Hedge (2000) asserts that reading is the interaction of two types: the reader and the text, and the reader and the writer. In the former type, the reader rebuilds his personal interpretation of the text, and in the latter, he tries to get the author's intended meaning. Nevertheless, Anderson and Urquhart (1984) state that there are many different kinds of purposes for reading that resorting to a general

definition might be accused of being a facile attempt. That might be the reason for having so many different definitions and views about reading in the literature. There are also numerous models for reading comprehension in the literature. One is the well-known bottom up model which as stated by Rayner and Pollatsek (1989) revolves around the idea that visual information is transformed through a series of stages with little influence from “general world knowledge, contextual information, or higher-order processing strategies” (p. 25). On the other hand, in the top-down model, the belief is maintained that the reader has an active contribution to the lower processes, comprehension resides in the reader, and there is more dependence on meaning cues rather than the visual elements (Asher & Simpson, 1994; Nunan, 2003; Ross, Roe, & Burn, 1999; Ur, 1996). In this model, the reader utilizes background knowledge to predict that are later confirmed or rejected based on searching the text (Nunan, 2003; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989; Rumelhardt, 1980). But, as schema theory research has attempted to clarify it, efficient and effective reading requires both top-down and bottom-up strategies generating interactively (Horner, 1998).

On the other hand, the componential approaches, as stated by Asher and Simpson (1994), try to attend to those aspects of reading that are engaged in constructing meaning from discourse. They state that based on this model, readers use some basic component skills such as resolving anaphoric relations, activating schemata, drawing inferences, and monitoring comprehension so as to comprehend the written discourse. Due to the existence of the plethora of definitions and models for reading comprehension, there have also been different approaches to teaching reading comprehension in the field of Second Language Acquisition. Tomlinson (2003) reviews the traditional ‘reading comprehension-based approach’, the ‘skill/strategy-based approach’, the ‘schema-based approach’, and the ‘language-based approach’ and holds that the reading comprehension-based approach is the typical presentation of the text followed up by post-reading questions and takes a strong stance in the controversy about whether a text has one meaning or multiple meaning depending on the reader. Tomlinson further explains that the skill/strategy-based approach is based on the perspective that readers need certain efficient strategies that can be acquired through guided and explicit practice or teaching and which can finally yield to automatic execution of those skills. In explaining the third approach, Tomlinson holds that the approach is based on the idea that activating content information plays a vital role in the comprehension and recall of information.

Finally, as stated by Tomlinson, the language-based approach which had once gained allegiance in 1950s-1960s, regained its lost support in 1980s-1990s by the recognition of the importance of general language ability for reading and the active role of the reader in reading, such as using prior knowledge, manipulating syntactic patterns outside a discourse context, and disambiguating syntactical patterns during the reading process. It must be mentioned that recent progresses in discourse analysis are being incorporated into language-based reading pedagogy. Carrell

(1984a; 1984b; 1985) found that knowledge of textual organization is an important contributor to reading ability and advocated the importance of including instruction on the macrostructure of texts in L2 reading pedagogy.

### **2.7.2. Multimodal Discourse and Multimedia**

We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which discourse can have great impacts on different aspects of our life, for example, on education language learning, language teaching, etc. Also, discourse and here multimodal discourse can affect the linguistic ability of language learners, such as, their reading comprehension skill etc. Halliday (1985) believed that in the particular social context, people always made the most out of semiotic resources to achieve the design of meaning and accordingly different semiotic resources constituted multimodality (quoted in Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 80). Nowadays, the multimodal discourse theory becomes gradually necessary in the language teaching. LeVine & Scollon (2004) deemed that multimodal was related to the different modals which were used in communication, including films, videos, speech, pictures, color, and taste. (p. 3-5). Other scholars suggested that multimodal discourse pertained to the interaction via more than two organs (Hu, 2007; Gu, 2007; Zhang, 2009; Zhu, 2008).

Modal and media are the two main terms in the realm of multimodal discourse. The former is the medium through which information communication is obtained among people, or the transmitter of information, and the medium which includes more than two transmitters is called multimedia (Gu, 2007).

### **2.8.2. Multimodal Discourse and Multiliteracies**

In the 2000s, the new London Group including eleven linguists firstly suggested the concept of multiliteracy. They believed that with the quick progress of information technology, people had to have contact with various information of medium transmission on a daily basis, such as print, films, pictures, videotapes and communicate with culture groups with different backgrounds. Therefore, it is vitally necessary to develop learners' multiliteracies in EFL teaching.

Helgesen (2003), Rost (2002) and Richards & Schmidt (2002) all defined reading comprehension as an active process of meaning creation. Scholars made some valuable suggestions for it. Kress et al. (2001, p. 42) suggested that in the EFL classroom the conduct, visual and linguistic semiotic resources introduced by teachers and learners ought to be made full use of and the interaction between the resources should be promoted in order to achieve the creation and literacy of complete meanings. Healy suggested four stages for classroom teaching, namely situated practice, critical framing and transforming practice, overt instruction, (quoted in Hu, 2007). Led by teachers, learners might experience, analyze and use the multimodal texts, and become subjects of the classroom teaching to develop their overall EFL learners.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1.3. Participants and Setting

The participants who answer the research questions in the present study, included 40 male and female intermediate EFL learners (40males and 40 females) whose age in both control and experimental groups ranged from 22 to 42 Learning English at the English department in Knowledge University and Salahaddin University in Erbil, Kurdistan Iraq, including various ethnicities from different parts of the country, took part in the study. In instruction to homogenize the participants and to make sure about their level of general proficiency, a quick placement test version 2 was administered to the participants. The measure for passing the test was scoring between 38 to 48 (equal to intermediate level) based on the quick placement test version two, and the learners who got below 38 or above 48 were crossed out of the study. The participants of the control group were taught IELTS reading comprehension texts without using pictures and videos as a type of multimodal-based instruction. But the participants of the experimental group were taught IELTS reading comprehension texts using pictures and videos as a type of multimodal-based instruction. Also there was a 2 months gap between the pre-test and post-test in order to avoid test effect and in order to be able to better evaluate how multimodal-based instruction could affect Learning of Reading comprehension skill for the experimental groups.

A reading comprehension practice test of IELTS was administered to the participants which was used as a pre-test and post-test. IELTS practice tests contain three sections. The measure for passing the test was scoring between 5 to 7 (equal to intermediate level) based on the public version of IELTS Reading Comprehension Band Descriptors. Participants of the control group did not take IELTS reading comprehension test. Since they did not receive any multi model based instruction. But participants of the experimental group took the test in order to see how much multi model based instruction affected their language learning which reading comprehension skill is specifically here.

It is necessary to mention that for the purposes of this research, the participants were required to obtain a band score of 5 to 7 for the reading comprehension test. Also, 40 male and female learners in Salahadin University in Erbil, Kurdistan Iraq took the quick placement test, and almost all test-takers had participated in IELTS Academic Reading classes. Finally, two group of 40 male and female learners were selected as the participants of the study, one group in Knowledge University (the experimental group), and the other one in Salahadin University (the control group). All the participants of the study were Kurdish native speakers who were studying English as a foreign language and had never lived in an English speaking country.

### 3.2.3. Instrumentation

The quick placement test consisted of 60 questions and the time allocated to answer the original test was 30 minutes given to the participants. The quick placement test questionnaire involved in two parts: Part One (Questions 1-40) for all of the students and Part Two (Questions 41-60) to determine their level of proficiency. The participants were in the same level in both control and experimental groups.

Since this research intended to assess the reading comprehension skill of the learners, the same reading comprehension test of IELTS was used not only as a pre-test, but also as a posttest in the control and experimental groups. In fact, having taken the pretest, the learners received the post-test after a two-months-period study during which the learners in experimental received the treatment, they were given reading comprehension task with images and illustrations in them, they were also asked to watch short videos about which they needed to answer their prompts, whereas the control group took their normal reading comprehension classes without any images and videos being incorporated into the activities. Juxtaposing the results of the pretest and the post-test in each of the control and experimental groups, the researcher was able to understand if there was any change regarding the reading comprehension skill of the learners in each group. One important point was that based on the IELTS Reading Comprehension Band Descriptors, the students' reading comprehension scores in the pretest and post-test ranged from five to seven. Four raters scored the posttest based on the public version of IELTS Reading Comprehension Band Descriptors, (the way through which the reading comprehension test was scored, was explained before). The students' scores were below five, between 5 and 7, and above seven.

### 3.3.3. Procedures

This study intended to examine the role of multimodal discourse in Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill. The following procedures are taken into consideration in the study process:

Because the syllabuses of both institutes were based on Cambridge IELTS book No.10, The learners who registered in the course were required to take Reading comprehension practice tests of IELTS. Then, among the learners who took Reading comprehension practice tests of IELTS in the two institutes, the researcher chose randomly one group of the learners as the control group (Salahadin University) and the other group of the learners (Knowledge University) as the experimental group. The students in both the control and the experimental groups participated in the Reading Comprehension course for two months, three sessions per week.

### 3.8.3. Data Procedures

The data analyzed, completed the (25.0) version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Accordingly, Mann-Whitney Test, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, Independent-Samples T-Test, and Paired-Samples T-Test were estimated based on the results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test that made clear the normality and non-normality of the data.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Having collected the data, using the instruments, the researcher has come up with tangible results and conclusions which are presented in the following sections.

### 4.1. Results of Normality

To make sure that the data distribution is normal, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run. Table 1 shows the results.

**Table 1: Results of Normalizing Test:**

	paragraph1	paragraph2	qpt	ielts1	ielts2
N	40	40	40	40	40
Normal					
Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	12.2500	13.6500	26.8500	5.4125
	Std. Deviation	5.9500	1.72091	2.22515	2.17857
	Absolute	.73935	.70529	.142	.137
	Positive	.138	.147	.157	.108
	Negative	.088	.130	.112	.113
Most					
Extreme					
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.900	.870	.874	.930	.995
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.393	.436	.430	.352	.276

As Table 1 shows data distribution is normal since Sig. (2-tailed) is greater than .05 for all variables. Null-hypothesis of the above test indicates the normality so if p-value is greater than .05 the normality is accepted.

### 4.2. Results of Quick Placement Test:

Quick placement test was administered as a means to homogenize the participants. Their performance in the test was analyzed and data is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 :**Results of independent samples t-test for QPT

N M SD Df T Sig.

Cont. 20 26.95 2.30 38 .28 .77

Exp. 20 26.75 2.09

As Table 2 displays, there is not any statistically significant ( $df=38$ ,  $t= .28$ ,  $sig=.77 > .05$ ) difference between the means of control ( $N=20$ ,  $M=26.95$ ) and experimental ( $N=20$ ,  $M=26.75$ ) in quick placement test.

#### 4.3. Results of Pretest (IELTS Reading Comprehension):

Means of the two groups in IELTS Reading Comprehension before the experiment were compared (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Results of independent samples t-test for pretest (IELTS Reading Comprehension)  
Group N M SD Df T Sig. Cont. 20 11.95 2.01 38 1.10 .27 Exp. 20 12.55 1.35

Based on the data observed in Table 3, both groups are not statistically significantly ( $df=38$ ,  $t=1.10$ ,  $sig=.27>.05$ ) different in IELTS Reading Comprehension at the start of the study. Participants' performance in IELTS pretest is also shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Results of independent samples t-test for pretest (IELTS reading comprehension)  
Group N M SD Df T Sig. Cont. 20 5.61 .79 38 1.75 .087 Exp. 20 5.21 .63

Table 4 shows that there is not any significant difference ( $df=38$ ,  $t=1.75$ ,  $sig=.087>.05$ ) between the two groups in IELTS Reading Comprehension administered at the outset of the study. Means of the control and experience groups are 5.61 and 5.21, respectively.

#### 4.3 Results of posttest (IELTS Reading Comprehension):

Having implemented the treatment, the researcher tried to address the research questions of the study through comparing the means of the two groups in the reading comprehension tasks completed by the students.

**Table 5:** Results of independent samples t-test for posttest (IELTS Reading Comprehension)  
Group N M SD Df T Sig.  
Cont. 20 12.45 1.95 38 4.01 .000 Exp. 20 14.85 1.81

According to, Table 5 participants of the experimental group ( $M=14.85$ ,  $SD=1.81$ ) performed significantly ( $df=38$ ,  $t=4.01$ ,  $sig=.000$ ) better than their counterparts in the control group ( $M=12.45$ ,  $SD=1.95$ ).

To see whether there is a significant difference between the two groups in IELTS Reading Comprehension task, independent samples t-test was run. Table 6 shows the results.

**Table 6:** Results of independent samples t-test for posttest (IELTS reading comprehension)

Group	N	M	SD	Df	T	Sig.	Cont.	20	5.62	.75	38	3.25	.002	Exp.	20	6.27	.47

As shown in Table 6, there is a statistically significant ( $df=38$ ,  $t=3.25$ ,  $sig=.00$ ) between the experimental ( $M=6.27$ ;  $SD=.47$ ) and the control group ( $M=5.62$ ;  $SD=.75$ ) in IELTS reading comprehension.

This research aimed at investigating the role of multimodal discourse in Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill. Reading Comprehension skill shows an essential role to develop learners' contact and proficiency for the purpose of statement and communication. Considering the information that not enough study has been done to compare the role of multimodal discourse in improvement of the Iraqi EFL learners' Reading Comprehension skill. When we incorporate teaching, learning and assessment, our assessment instrument develops a kind of knowledge instrument that is beneficiary to learners to study and improve their reading comprehension skill. The participants of the study were in the immediate level of proficiency so further researches should investigate other levels of ability in respect to the application of multimodal discourse in reading comprehension classrooms. This study sheds light on the way that multimodal discourse, in reading comprehension, supports learners' reading comprehension ability, mainly in the EFL intermediate context. If multimodal discourse implemented in intermediate, and advanced level, learners will gain knowledge in English Reading Comprehension. In order to investigate the role of multimodal discourse in Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skill of the participants through the performance of the control and experimental groups, the participants were required to take the same test twice as the pre-test and post-test of the study. The present findings support the argument of Moreno and Mayer (2007) who believe that different modes are used in multimodal learning environment to represent content knowledge. In addition, Shah and Freedmen (2003, as cited in Anggrainy, 2016) argue that multimodal courses allow instructional events or elements to be presented in more than one sensory mode (multiple representations), thus further facilitating student's learning.

## 6. Conclusions

The present study focused on the role of multimodal discourse in Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. The multimodal discourse theory offers a new perception for the College English teaching. The teaching mode based on the multimodal discourse theory delivers the realistic situation and the assistant condition for the College English teaching, thus elevating the teaching efficiency greatly. In this kind of class, many modes can't be neglected and arbitrarily shared. The choice of mode must supply to the discourse situation consequently and

proportionally. Consequently when the teacher makes the PPTs and chooses the way of multimodal teaching, the use of multimode must be reasonable, depending on the real situation.

Results of t-test confirmed significantly positive role of multimodal discourse in Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension skills, implemented throughout the course. Multimodal discourse, thanks to recent developments in electronic area, can be implemented in EFL settings where teachers and learners alike can send and receive written products in a short period of time. These contexts, in which there is no face-to-face interaction, can facilitate the process of teaching and learning. Recently, according to Ho (2012), with the employment of multimodal discourse, many reading comprehension teachers have employed synchronous or asynchronous peer review to teach their learners. The learners in this research were all at the intermediate level of proficiency which limits the generalizability of the result only to this proficiency level. Also, the time period for the investigation is limited to only one term of institutes, about two months which may affect the generalizability or external validity of the result. Also, because of the inability of the researcher to randomly select the participants of the research, the results are limited to the degree of their generalizability as it is also clear in the choice of the design of the study, that is, an experimental design.

In the present research, the researcher concludes that multimodal teaching can have a positive impact on the improvement of Reading Comprehension skill. Pictures and videos can help language learners learn vocabularies and better understand the relationships between minor and major ideas in a reading comprehension text. When the classroom takes on the atmosphere of authentic situations, then, learning will happen effectively. The present research can give a hint to other researchers who are highly interested in investigating the same topic in their own country or replicate the same study for advanced level language learners. The results of the study will be beneficial for stakeholders and those who are involved in teaching the English language. Also, the results will be helpful for those language learners who would like to get a better mastery over their comprehension of reading texts. Since, reading comprehension is one of the four linguistic skills, it will yield better results if teaching of reading comprehension texts is integrated with using proper pictures, videos and clips. Because psychologically speaking, pictures and videos can warm up the language learners for the topic which is taught to them and therefore can facilitate reading comprehension process.

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