

The Impact of Multimodal Communication on Second Language Listening Comprehension among Kurdistan EFL Students

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the impact of multimodal communication on Kurdish EFL learners' listening comprehension. It sets out to identify the most effective modes of multimodal communication among Kurdish EFL learners, and the type of nonverbal communication cues Kurdish learners prefer their teachers to use. To conduct this quasi-experimental study, 50 second stage students of English language department, faculty of education at Soran university are chosen as the sample. The participants were three groups. After taking a listening test, two best groups, based on proficiency test performance, are selected to be experimental and control groups, and the other group is used to take a pilot study. The instructor is guided to follow some instructions for both groups provided by the researcher. The experimental group is exposed to multimodal communication, and the control group is taught without using multimodal communication. Moreover, a questionnaire is distributed among the experimental group only which consists of multiple choice and open-ended questions. This indicates that it is a mixed methods study, which is both quantitative and qualitative. The results revealed that multimodal communication has a positive impact on participants' comprehension and subtitled videos are considered as the most effective mode that enhance their comprehension.

Keyword: Multimodal Communication, Nonverbal Communication, Listening Comprehension, Kurdish EFL Learners.

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Introduction

Communication, as a vital aspect of delivering information, does not consist of only one mode as the world and technology develop rapidly. Thus, language teaching and learning do not rely on only one method, especially traditional methods of language teaching. More importantly, traditional methods are outdated. So, they are rapidly being replaced by multimodal teaching methods. Liu (2024) compares both traditional methods and multimodal methods. She states that traditional teaching approaches place a strong emphasis on student memorization and teacher explanations through text and oral instruction. On the one hand, these methods of delivering knowledge could be one-dimensional and they ignore the unique characteristics of each learner. Multimodal education approaches, on the other hand, combine several sensory experiences, such visual and audio, to produce a more engaging and dynamic learning environment.

In the Kurdistan educational context, second language acquisition is challenging due to the dominance of traditional teaching methods and the low listening comprehension proficiency among Kurdistan EFL learners. These methods emphasize verbal and written instruction while neglecting multimodal communication, leaving a gap in meeting learners' needs. Saeed (2020), found that Kurdish learners struggle to comprehend the speaker's intended meaning, a core issue in listening. Malla (2020) highlighted that limited technological resources and unsuitable classroom settings prevent the use of effective multimodal tools like role-plays, songs, and videos. The main aim of this study is to explore the impact of multimodal communication on Kurdistan EFL learners' listening comprehension. Additionally, the study sets out to determine the most effective mode of multimodal communication among Kurdistan EFL learners for enhancing their listening comprehension, and it also attempts to investigate

the implications of multimodal communication practices in the Kurdish context. The following questions guide the study:

1. What impact does multimodal communication have on listening comprehension?
2. What modes of multimodal communication are effective for enhancing Kurdish EFL learners' listening comprehension?
3. What are the implications of multimodal communication for EFL teaching practices in the Kurdish context?

Based on prior literature, there are two hypotheses as follow:

1. Multimodal communication has significant impact on listening comprehension among Kurdish EFL learners.
2. Images are the most effective mode of multimodal communication for enhancing listening comprehension among Kurdish EFL learners.

This study is significant in filling a gap in research within the Kurdish EFL context, where the use of multimodal communication is underexplored. It also offers insights for teachers and curriculum designers to integrate multimodal communication modes into classroom practices. This study is also grounded in multimodal learning theory, which highlights the role of integrating various sensory inputs visual, auditory, and physical in facilitating comprehension. Learning becomes more effective when supported by multimodal cues such as images, gestures, and videos.

Kress and Van, as cited in Shalihah et al. (2018), defined multimodality as using multiple modes of communication by a speaker at one time. A person may use other ways of delivering his or her message by using an image, gesture, and a non-verbal cue, and it does not always have to be words. Mzafar and Jamal (2021), defined listening and stated that people with good listening skills can comprehend what others are saying and the meaning behind their words. Additionally, listening skills as input skills are difficult, and many learners face challenges. Yet, they are vital skills since meaning comprehension depends on them. Nadig (2013), defines listening comprehension in her study. She believes that the various steps required to comprehend and make sense of spoken language are all included in listening comprehension. These include being able to identify speech sounds, comprehend the meaning of certain words, and/or comprehend the syntax of sentences in which they appear. Listening comprehension is a complicated process which needs decoding what is being spoken. Avci and Doghonadze

(2017), draw the conclusion that the English listening proficiency of Kurdish EFL learners in Iraqi Kurdistan Region does not meet international standards. The learners' listening anxiousness is a genuine issue.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

In their qualitative study entitled, “Multimodal Learning Strategies in Secondary EFL Education”, Nurhayati and Rohi (2024), explored how multimodal learning enhances students' language proficiency and teaching strategies. Conducted in a secondary school context, the study involved in-depth interviews with EFL teachers as the data collection tool. The findings revealed that using multiple modalities, such as interactive tasks, visual aids, and audio materials supports diverse learning styles and improves comprehension. The study emphasizes the value of multimodal approaches in English instruction and offers practical guidance for teachers.

Zareian et al. (2015), in their experimental study “The Effect of Multimodal Presentation on EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension and Self-Efficacy”, investigated the impact of multimodal listening materials on comprehension and self-efficacy. The study involved 50 intermediate EFL learners from an Iranian university, divided into experimental and control groups. While the control group received traditional instruction, the experimental group used multimodal materials. Interviews were also conducted to assess learners' perceptions. Results showed a significant improvement in listening comprehension, but not self-efficacy for the experimental group. Subtitled films were especially effective when content was engaging and supported by preparation and teacher feedback. A review article by Wahyuni (2017), examined the role of verbal and nonverbal communication in language learning and emphasized its importance in educational success. The study concluded that teachers who effectively use both forms of communication can foster more meaningful learning. Wahyuni also stressed that educators should actively practice positive verbal and nonverbal communication to enhance their teaching effectiveness.

Methodology

Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected through an experiment and a questionnaire. Fifty second-year English language department students at Soran University were divided into three groups. Two top-performing groups (20 students each) were assigned as experimental and control groups, while the third group (10 students) participated in a pilot study for validity purposes. Both groups took a pretest and posttest. The experimental group received multimodal input (texts, videos, pictures), while the control group completed audio-only tests. After six weeks of instruction, the experimental group completed a questionnaire consisting of 10 closed-ended and 6 open-ended items. The survey aimed to identify effective multimodal modes and their implications in the Kurdish EFL context. To ensure validity, it was reviewed by five expert instructors. The study adhered to ethical principles by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. Participants were free to withdraw at any time, and all measures were taken to avoid psychological or emotional harm.

Participants

Fifty second-year students from English department at Soran university were selected and divided into three groups. 20 students were selected as experimental group and 20 others as control group. The 10 others participated in a pilot study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began after the pretest, six weeks of instruction, and posttest. Questionnaire responses were also collected at the end. Quantitative data were manually entered into SPSS and analyzed using t-tests and p-values, with results presented in tables. The first section of the survey was also analyzed statistically. The qualitative responses from the second section were coded and themed to identify common patterns and key insights.

Results

Results of the Experiment Test

The results of table one above show the means of the pretest and posttest to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between them. The paired samples t-test in this table displays that a statistically significant difference $M = 3.5$, and this indicates that learners scored 3.5 scores higher in the posttest compared to the pretest. However, this increase in mean difference reflects enhanced performance and improvement following the treatment.

More importantly, the p-value ($<.001$) also shows that this improvement is statistically difference, and this change is highly unlikely to have happened by chance

		Paired Differences						
				95% Confidence Interval				
		Std.	Std. Error	of the Difference				Sig. (2-
	Mean	Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	tailed)
Pre-Result	-	4.35007	.68781	-4.89122	-2.10878	-5.089	39	<.001
Post-Result	3.50000							

Table 1 The Weighted Mean and Validity of the Items

Results of the Questionnaire

Table 2 Results of The Questionnaire

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St. D
Q1	5 Items	8	10	2	0	0	1.70	.657
Q2	5 Items	5	11	3	0	1	2.05	.945
Q3	5 Items	6	11	2	0	1	1.95	.945
Q4	5 Items	0	2	6	11	1	3.55	.759
Q5	5 Items	6	5	1	7	1	2.60	1.392
Q6	5 Items	0	1	6	11	2	3.70	.733
Q7	5 Items	7	9	4	0	0	1.85	.745
Q8	5 Items	1	0	6	11	2	3.65	.875
Q9	5 Items	3	10	1	5	1	2.55	1.191
Q10	5 Items	1	0	0	10	9	4.30	.923

The first question reads ‘Which of the following multimodal communication modes help you comprehend listening materials?’. Out of 20 learners, eight learners chose pictures, and ten learners selected subtitled videos.

The second question reads ‘in your opinion, which single mode of MC do you find most consistently helpful for understanding listening comprehension in the classroom?’. As it can be seen from the table, five students preferred pictures, and eleven of them selected subtitled videos.

Question three reads ‘Which modes of MC do you like your teacher to use often during listening activities?’. Six learners selected pictures, and eleven of them chose subtitled videos. Question four reads ‘How helpful do you think the teacher’s nonverbal communication (gestures, facial expressions, and body language) was in enhancing your listening

comprehension?'. Six learners chose moderately helpful; eleven students thought that the teacher's nonverbal teaching was very helpful.

Question five reads 'Which of the following teacher's nonverbal communication helps you comprehend listening materials?'. Out of 20 learners, six of them thought that Kinesics helps them comprehend listening materials; seven learners selected a paralanguage.

Question six reads 'How effective do you think multimodal communication is in improving your listening comprehension?'. Eleven learners think that multimodal communication is highly effective in improving their listening comprehension.

Question seven reads 'Which of the following nonverbal cues were most helpful for your comprehension?'. Seven learners selected hand gestures, and nine of them selected facial expressions as the most helpful nonverbal cues for their comprehension.

Question eight reads 'Are you confident in your listening comprehension after having multimodal communication in lessons?'. Six learners chose neutral. Whereas eleven students agree that they feel confident after the use of the MC in lessons.

Question nine reads 'Do you agree that learning from teachers who only use verbal communication with students is effective in improving listening comprehension?'. For this question, three learners strongly disagreed and ten of them disagreed.

The last question reads 'Do you believe that learning using multimodal communication cues is more effective than learning with traditional methods?'. Only one student selected strongly disagree but ten of them chose agree.

Results of The Open-ended Questions

The following are the results of the questions:

Question one asks 'Do you think more Kurdish EFL instructors should use multimodal communication in their teaching instead of only using verbal communication?' If yes, why?' Many students agree that understanding is a key reason for Kurdish EFL instructors to use multimodal communication in their teaching instead of only using verbal communication. Furthermore, clarify meaning was another theme revealed from learners' responses.

Question two reads 'Did multimodal communication make the lessons more interesting and engaging for you to learn? Please explain your answer' For this question, all the learners agree that MC makes lessons more interesting, and they think because of MC being easy to follow and provides more modes.

Question three reads ‘What challenges did you face while learning through multimodal communication?’. Four students did not face any challenges. Others mentioned that they faced some challenges such as having many MC cues at once, some pictures and videos are unclear, and some audios are fast.

Question four reads ‘In your point of view, how can teachers improve their use of multimodal communication to help students enhance listening comprehension?’. The following are the learners’ suggestions for the question: Teachers can use clear videos, pictures, and images. Videos should have captions. They should use facial expressions that match their speech, and integrate different MC cues.

Question five reads ‘Do you think combining diverse types of multimodal communication tools is more effective for enhancing your listening comprehension than relying on only one mode type? If yes, which combination do you think is more effective and why?’. Students had different suggestions for the combination such as pictures and audio, subtitled videos and images, facial expressions, and written texts.

The last question asked ‘After experiencing multimodal communication in your lessons, do you think using multimodal communication cues is more effective for improving listening comprehension than traditional methods?’. Explain your answer. For this question, all learners think MC cues are more effective than traditional methods as they make listening comprehension better and more effective.

Discussion

The results of the pretest and posttest show a significant improvement in the experimental group, indicating that MC positively impacts Kurdish EFL learners’ listening comprehension. These findings support the first hypothesis, which proposed that multimodal communication has significant impact on listening comprehension among Kurdish EFL learners. MC cues such as images, videos, diagrams, written texts, and nonverbal communication cues like body language, facial expressions, gestures, and paralinguistics have all shown to influence comprehension positively.

Regarding the second research question, the questionnaire results show that subtitled videos were the most preferred and effective mode for enhancing listening comprehension, followed by images. This contradicts the second hypothesis, which proposed that images would be the most effective mode. Therefore, captioned videos are considered the most effective single mode, although images remain helpful. Finally, in response to the third research question,

learners agreed that Kurdish EFL instructors should use multimodal communication cues such as captioned videos, images, and written texts in their lectures, as these modes significantly enhance learners' comprehension. The findings highlight the need for incorporating MC practices into EFL teaching in the Kurdish context.

Conclusions

This study concludes that multimodal communication using visuals, videos, written texts, and nonverbal cues significantly enhance listening comprehension among Kurdistan EFL learners. Pretest and posttest results confirmed measurable improvement in the experimental group. While the initial hypothesis favored images, findings revealed that subtitled videos were the most effective mode, followed by images. Overall, Kurdish EFL learners found multimodal cues more engaging and beneficial than traditional verbal methods.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Study

Since the present study only included 50 learners from second stage students of English department at Soran university; these results, therefore, could not be generalized to all Kurdish EFL learners. It is suggested that more future research should be conducted in different Kurdish regions and educational levels to generalize the findings and further validate the impact of multimodality. Moreover, the researcher suggests the curriculum designers consider designing materials that incorporate multimodal elements to make listening and speaking instruction more effective. It is also worth suggesting that Kurdish EFL instructors depend on MC cues and integrate them into their classes, especially subtitled videos, images, and written texts to enhance their learners' listening comprehension.

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پوخته

مه‌به‌ست له‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌یه‌ لیکۆلینه‌وه‌یه‌ له‌ کاریگه‌ری فره‌ مودیلی په‌یوه‌نده‌یه‌کان له‌ تیگه‌یشتنی گوێگرتن له‌ فێرخوازانێ کورد له‌ زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌ک زمانی بیانی، ئه‌مه‌ش بۆ دیاری کردنی کاریگه‌رترین شیوازه‌کانی فره‌ مودیلی په‌یوه‌نده‌یه‌کانی تیگه‌یشتنی گوێگرتن له‌ نێوان فێرخوازانێ کورد له‌ زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌ک زمانی بیانی، وه‌ جوهره‌کانی ئاماژه‌ی نوسراوی که‌ فێرخوازانێ کورد پێیان باشته‌ مامۆستاکانیان به‌کاری به‌یئن. بۆ ئه‌نجامدانی ئه‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌ نیمچه‌ کرداریه‌ ۵۰ فێرخوازی قوناغی دووهمی به‌شی ئینگلیزی فاکه‌لتی په‌روه‌رده‌ هه‌لبژێردراون وه‌ک نمونه‌ .قوتابه‌کان له‌ سێ گروپ پیکه‌اتبوون؛ دواي ئه‌نجامدانی تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی گوێگرتن، دوو باشتترین گروپ، به‌ پشتبه‌ستن به‌ ئه‌نجامدانی تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی لێهاتووێ هه‌لبه‌ژێردری بۆ ئه‌وه‌ی گروپی ئه‌زمونی و کۆنترۆل دیاری بکری. گروپه‌که‌ی تر بۆ ئه‌نجامدانی توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌کی تاقیکاری (study pilot) به‌کارده‌هێنرێت. راهێنه‌ر پێنمایی ده‌کریته‌ که‌ هه‌ندیک پێنمایی بۆ هه‌ردوو گروپه‌که‌ جێبه‌جێ بکات که‌ له‌لایه‌ن توێژه‌ره‌وه‌ دابین کراوه‌. گروپی تاقیکاری به‌رکه‌وته‌ی په‌یوه‌ندی فره‌ مودیلی ده‌بیته‌، گروپی کۆنترۆلێش به‌بی به‌کارهێنانی په‌یوه‌ندی فره‌ مودیلی فێر ده‌کریته‌. جگه‌ له‌ وه‌ش، راپرسیه‌ک ته‌نها له‌ نێوان گروپی تاقیکاریدا دابه‌ش ده‌کریته‌ که‌ پیکه‌اتوه‌ له‌ پرسیاوی فره‌ هه‌لبژاردن و کوتایی کراوه‌. ئه‌مه‌ش ئاماژه‌یه‌ بۆ ئه‌وه‌ی که‌ لیکۆلینه‌وه‌یه‌کی شیوازی تیکه‌له‌، که‌ هه‌م چه‌ندایه‌تییه‌ و هه‌م چۆنایه‌تییه‌. ئه‌نجامه‌کان ده‌ریانخست که‌ په‌یوه‌ندی فره‌ مودیلی کاریگه‌ری ئه‌رتی له‌سه‌ر تیگه‌یشتنی فێرخوازانێ کورد هه‌یه‌ و فیدیوی ژیرنوس وه‌ک کاریگه‌رترین شیواز داده‌نرێت که‌ تیگه‌یشتیان به‌رز ده‌کاته‌وه‌. وشه‌ی سه‌ره‌کی: په‌یوه‌ندی فره‌ مودیلی ، په‌یوه‌ندی نوسراو، تیگه‌یشتن له‌ گوێگرتن، فێرخوازانێ کورد له‌ زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌ک زمانی بیانی

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة تأثير التواصل متعدد الوسائط على فهم الاستماع لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية باللغة الكردية. لا شك أن الطرق التقليدية لم تعد فعالة، وأن المتعلمين لم يعودوا يتعلمون منها. وبالتالي، تزايدت الحاجة إلى استخدام طرق متعددة بدلاً من طريقة واحدة. تهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف تأثير التواصل متعدد الوسائط على فهم الاستماع لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية باللغة الكردية. علاوة على ذلك، تهدف إلى تحديد أكثر طرق التواصل متعدد الوسائط فعالية لدى متعلمي اللغة الكردية، ونوع إشارات التواصل غير اللفظية التي يفضلون استخدامها معلميهم لها. لإجراء الدراسة، تم اختيار ٤٠ طالباً من طلاب المرحلة الثانية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية بجامعة سوران كعينة. الدراسة تجريبية، حيث قُسم طلاب المرحلة الثانية إلى ثلاث مجموعات. بعد إجراء اختبار استماع، تم اختيار أفضل مجموعتين لتكونا مجموعتين تجريبيتين وضابنتين، بينما استُخدمت المجموعة الأخرى لإجراء دراسة استطلاعية. يُوجّه المُدرّب لاتباع بعض التعليمات التي وضعها الباحث لكلا المجموعتين. يُدرّس طلاب المجموعة التجريبية باستخدام التواصل متعدد الوسائط، بينما تُدرّس المجموعة الضابطة بدون أي تواصل متعدد الوسائط. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، وُزّع استبيان على المجموعة التجريبية فقط، مما يُشير إلى أن الدراسة مُختلطة المنهج، أي كمية ونوعية. أظهرت النتائج أن للتواصل متعدد الوسائط تأثيراً إيجابياً على فهم متعلمي اللغة الكردية، وأن مقاطع الفيديو المُترجمة هي الوسيلة الأكثر فعالية لتعزيز فهمهم. الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل متعدد الوسائط، التواصل غير اللفظي، الفهم، متعلمو الكرد اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية