From Text to Multimodality: Strategies for Enhancing Creative Writing within a Multiliteracy Framework

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Abstract: Teaching creative writing in Indonesian language learning requires innovative strategies that are responsive to current developments, especially in the context of multiliteracies. This study aims to explore teaching strategies that can improve students' creative writing skills through a multimodal approach within a multiliteracies framework. The research method used was descriptive qualitative. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The results of this study indicate that the integration of various media and modalities can increase students' motivation, engagement, and creativity in writing. This approach also encourages students to think more critically and reflectively in constructing meaning through various communication modes. Positive responses were shown by students, with 87.76% finding the learning more interesting. The implications of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators in designing more effective writing learning that is in line with current literacy developments.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the digital era has had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including education. The way humans access, process, and convey information has undergone fundamental changes. Literacy, once understood narrowly as the ability to read and write texts conventionally, has now shifted to a broader and more complex concept, namely multiliteracy. Multiliteracy is the ability to understand, interpret, and produce meaning through various media forms and modalities, such as text, images, audio, video, symbols, and other interactive elements. In learning practice, this approach combines various communication modes such as text, images, audio, video, and simulations to create a rich, interactive, and immersive learning experience (Hendrawaty, 2024). This approach adapts to the needs of the 21st century, where literacy challenges encompass not only cognitive aspects but also social and technological skills. Yunus Abidin in Khoimatun (2021) states that

there are four main competencies that individuals need to possess in the 21st century: the

ability to understand deeply, think critically, collaborate, and communicate. These four competencies are closely related to the mastery of adaptive and contextual literacy as the main foundation in building these abilities.

In this regard, multiliteracy presents itself as an approach that not only teaches traditional language skills but also develops students' abilities to construct meaning through various modes of communication. In line with this view, Yunus in Sari (2023) states that multiliteracy is the ability to express and understand ideas and information through various methods, both in the form of traditional texts and in more innovative formats, such as visual symbols, infographics, audio, and digital platforms. This is also supported by the view of McKee and Ogle in Nuryani (2019) who emphasize that multiliteracy education must start from the understanding that literacy includes the optimal use of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to support the thinking process and increase communication effectiveness. In line with this, previous research findings conducted by Sari in Prihatini (2021) revealed that multiliteracy competencies that can be developed through learning encompass five main dimensions: linguistic, gestural, visual, audiovisual, and spatial competencies. These competencies develop actively in contextual practice situations, open and collaborative learning, engagement in critical reflection processes, and direct application in creative practice. This demonstrates that multiliteracy is not merely a theory, but a practical framework that supports the development of more complex and adaptive communication skills to changing times.

The concepts of multiliteracy demonstrate that multiliteracy is not simply an extension of traditional literacy but rather a new paradigm in education, particularly in teaching writing skills. One language skill that is crucial to develop in this context is creative writing, as it allows students to express their ideas, imagination, and personal and social values in communicative and meaningful writing. According to Winarni (2022), creative writing is a form of thought expression that activates the imagination and can be developed through the right approach.

Furthermore, Aprilia (2022) stated that creative writing skills ideally encompass six main, interconnected aspects: knowledge, attitude, process, skills, outcomes, and professional orientation. The integration of these six aspects allows creative writing to be understood not only as a purely linguistic activity but also as a holistic, reflective, expressive, and professional process. According to Byrne in Wedasuwari (2023), writing is the transfer of one's thoughts into written language. Therefore, students require not only physical creativity but also critical and systematic thinking before expressing them in writing. However, in practice, creative writing instruction in higher education remains largely conventional. The learning process is still dominated by linear text-based writing assignments such as essays, short stories, and poetry, which do not involve other modalities that could actually enrich students' thinking processes, expand their imagination, and improve the quality of their expression. This situation reflects the imbalance between the teaching strategies used in the classroom and the realities of students' lives as a digital-native generation, accustomed to accessing and creating content through social media, blogs, videos, podcasts, and various multimodal digital platforms. Students' immense potential for creative expression and the production of meaning through various media has not been fully accommodated in formal learning, particularly in writing instruction. This mismatch between learning approaches and students' real-world experiences creates a gap in the development of contextual, creative, and meaningful writing skills.

Therefore, an adaptive writing teaching strategy is needed, which not only develops writing skills in the form of text, but also encourages students to become creators of meaning through various media and modes. A multimodal approach within a multiliteracy framework is believed to be able to increase motivation, engagement, and develop students' critical, reflective, and creative thinking. Through the use of various mutually supportive media, students can develop a more open and responsive way of thinking to social and technological contexts. The urgency of this research lies in the need to explore and develop multimodal-based creative writing teaching strategies within a multiliteracy framework. Based on this background, this research focuses on exploring multimodal-based creative

writing teaching strategies within a multiliteracy framework and students' responses to the strategies used in the learning process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design that sought to explore strategies used to improve creative writing skills through a multimodal approach within a multiliteracy framework. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in learning creative writing. This study was conducted in the fourth semester of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education study program. The classroom setting provided a natural context for examining how students interacted with multimodal assignments and how lecturers facilitated these activities. By situating the study within a realistic classroom environment, the findings are expected to provide authentic insights into the effectiveness and challenges of implementing multimodal strategies in teaching creative writing.

The data collection methods used in this study included observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Observation allowed the researcher to document interactions directly, including student engagement, participation, and responses to multimodal learning activities. Interviews were conducted with selected students and lecturers to gain deeper insights into their perceptions, challenges, and reflections regarding multimodal creative writing. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Additionally, a questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-ended questions was distributed to all students to capture broader trends in motivation, creativity, and the perceived effectiveness of the approach. The use of multiple techniques aimed to strengthen the credibility of the data through methodological triangulation, ensuring that findings were not based on a single instrument but rather reflected multiple perspectives. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and extraction/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of a multimodal-based creative writing learning strategy within a multiliteracy framework has a significant impact on student engagement, creativity, and reflective thinking. Based on classroom observations, students appeared more active, enthusiastic, and eager to participate in the learning process when given creative writing assignments with a multimodal approach. Students not only wrote short stories but also combined them with various visual, audio, or digital elements, such as posters, short videos, and interactive presentations. These activities encouraged students to think more critically and reflectively, as they were required to consider the relationship between the content of the text and the media used to convey the message.

To support the observational findings, questionnaire data was also collected to determine students' responses to this strategy. The results showed that 41.72% of students strongly agreed that multimodal strategies make learning more interesting, and 46.04% agreed. 11.65% of respondents disagreed, and only 0.59% disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed (0%). Thus, overall, 87.76% of students responded positively to the implementation of multimodal strategies in creative writing learning. These findings indicate that the multimodal approach is not only well-received by students but is also considered capable of improving the quality of their learning experience. This strategy allows students to express ideas more expressively, creatively, and meaningfully through various communication modes. Therefore, the implementation of multimodal strategies can be an innovative solution to address the challenges of learning to write in the era of multiliteracies, while also encouraging the development of 21st-century competencies that include collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

Table 1. Student Responses to Multimodal Creative Writing Instruction

Response Categories	Percentage (%)

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Strongly Agree	41.72
Agree	46.04
Somewhat Disagree	11.65
Disagree	0.59
Strongly Disagree	0.00

One example of student work implementing a multimodal strategy is a short story titled "The Butterfly." This short story is not only presented as a narrative text but also accompanied by a digital poster featuring a visual of dry leaves falling against a sunset backdrop. In an interview, the student explained that this visual symbolizes "persistence in facing life." The addition of this visual element demonstrates the student's ability to consciously use symbolism to strengthen the narrative message. The use of images as markers of deeper meaning reflects semiotic awareness, namely the ability to understand the relationship between text and visual elements in building a complete meaning. Another example is provided by a student who created a work entitled " From Words to Works." In his reflection, he stated, "I want readers to feel that every story and life experience can become a valuable work." This statement shows that multimodal assignments not only stimulate creative expression but also open up space for emotional engagement and deeper personal reflection in the process of writing. Works like this show that students are not just writing to complete academic assignments, but are truly building relationships between life experiences, the messages they want to convey, and the media used to convey them. Lecturers involved in observing the process and assessing the work found that the multimodal assignment demonstrated increased originality, depth of meaning, and personal engagement among students. They also observed that students were increasingly aware of how forms of representation (both verbal and visual) can influence the audience's perception and interpretation of a work. Thus, multimodal assignments have proven to not only enhance learning but also broaden students' thinking and the way they construct meaning in creative writing.

To complement the qualitative data, students' perceptions of this learning strategy are also visualized in the form of a bar graph (Figure 1), as a continuation of the distribution presented in Table 1. This visualization makes it clear that the majority of respondents chose the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" categories, which totaled 87.76%. The proportion of students who expressed disagreement was very small, only 12.24%, and none stated "Strongly Disagree". This fact confirms previous findings that the multimodal strategy was received positively by almost all participants, and made a real contribution to increasing motivation, creativity, and critical thinking skills in the writing process.

Figure 1. Student Responses to Multimodal Creative Writing Instruction
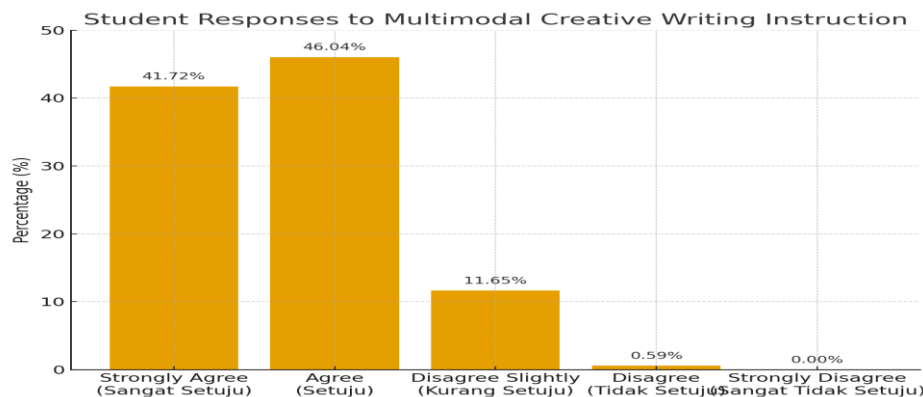
Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the integration of multimodal strategies in creative writing learning significantly increased student engagement, creativity, and reflective thinking. Students were not only involved in composing narrative texts but were also encouraged to develop their work by combining various modes of representation such as images, colors, sounds, and movements. This approach opened up space for students to construct meaning in a broader, contextual, and personal way, in line with the needs of 21st-century literacy. A concrete example of this finding is seen in the student's work entitled Si Kupu-kupu , which is not only a short story but also complemented by a digital poster depicting dry leaves and a sunset. In an interview, the student explained that the visualization represents "persistence in facing life." This visual symbolism

demonstrates the students' semiotic awareness in connecting narratives with profound multimodal elements. Other works such as Dari Kata Jadi Karya also demonstrate strong personal reflection, where the student states that every life experience can be transformed into something meaningful and valuable.

These works demonstrate that a multimodal approach provides greater space for students' creative and reflective expression. This aligns with Azzahra's (2024) view, which states that a multiliteracy approach is essential for equipping students to understand and produce texts in various social and cultural contexts. Multiliteracy is not just about conventional reading and writing, but also the ability to construct meaning through increasingly complex media and modes of communication.

Dewi (2025) emphasized that writing skills are an integral part of literacy competencies that must be developed continuously. Meanwhile, Tarigan (2020) views writing as a complex thinking process that involves formulating ideas, organizing sentences, and choosing appropriate diction to convey messages effectively. Within this framework, a multimodal approach helps students hone their critical and creative thinking skills in the writing process, while also increasing their awareness of the importance of selecting a form of representation that aligns with the intended meaning. Furthermore, Gunawan (2025) stated that the multimodal approach is closely related to the active learning model, as both place students at the center of the knowledge construction process. Learning is no longer one-way, but rather becomes a collaborative and exploratory process that encourages students to be directly involved in constructing meaning through real-life and reflective experiences. Thus, this approach not only improves cognitive learning outcomes but also develops students' affective and metacognitive aspects.

In terms of responses, the data shows that 87.76% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the multimodal approach made learning more interesting and meaningful. This reinforces previous findings that students were more enthusiastic, actively engaged, and felt encouraged to express their ideas more freely and authentically. Lecturers also noted an increase in the quality of student work, both in terms of originality, depth of meaning, and critical and reflective

thinking skills. Along with the development of digital technology and the shift in educational paradigms, Maureen Walsh in Azzahra (2025) emphasized that curriculum and pedagogy must be adapted to the demands of new literacies, including digital and multimodal literacies. Traditional literacies are no longer sufficient to prepare the younger generation to face the complexities of communication and information in the digital age.

Overall, multimodal-based creative writing instruction within a multiliteracy framework has been shown to bridge 21st-century literacy needs with more meaningful learning experiences. This strategy not only improves the quality of writing but also expands the ways in which students construct and convey meaning, strengthening cross-literacy skills that are crucial in today's digital age. The implications of these findings suggest that curriculum development and instructional design need to systematically consider the integration of multimodal approaches in creative writing instruction. Lecturers are required to be more innovative in facilitating the diversity of student expression and creating reflective and collaborative spaces that support the development of holistic and contextual digital literacy. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as an important basis for formulating pedagogical strategies that adapt to the dynamics of modern literacy and the needs of 21st-century learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that integrating multimodal strategies into creative writing instruction significantly enhances student engagement, creativity, and reflective thinking. The multimodal approach not only enriches the writing process by combining various media forms and modalities, but also encourages students to construct meaning more broadly, contextually, and personally. This aligns with the concept of multiliteracies, which demands the ability to understand and produce texts in various social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, this approach supports the development of critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills and aligns with an active learning model that places students at the center of learning. The positive response from the majority of students and the

improvement in the quality of their work demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy in creating a more meaningful learning experience relevant to the demands of 21st-century literacy. Therefore, multimodal-based creative writing instruction within a multiliteracy framework is an appropriate strategy to prepare students for the complexities of communication in the digital age.

As a recommendation, educators at the tertiary level are advised to begin designing writing curricula and learning activities that integrate multimodal approaches systematically and contextually. The use of digital media, visuals, audio, and interactive platforms should be optimized to support students' creative expression. Furthermore, training or workshops are needed for lecturers to improve their understanding and skills in implementing multiliteracy-based learning strategies. Further research is also recommended to examine the effectiveness of this approach across various contexts and disciplines to broaden its application and impact in education.

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