

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background of the research, objectives, research questions, significance of the research, clarification of terms, and thesis organization.

#### **1.1. Background of the Research**

With the rise of digital technologies, societies are undergoing changes in how people communicate and share information. As internet access and mobile device usage continue to grow, many aspects of communication and meaning-making are digitally mediated through social media, messaging applications, video-sharing platforms, and more. These changes require people to be digitally literate.

While it is widely accepted that literacy generally is simply defined as the ability to read and write, Fraire (1987) views literacy as a dimension of culture and an expression of how people produce, transform, and reproduce meaning. In the digital era, literacy includes the ability to navigate, evaluate, and create information using a range of digital technologies (Ayhan, 2016). This shift recognizes that contemporary communication often involves multimedia and digital formats. Consequently, literacy evolves into “multiliteracies”, a concept that broadens the understanding of literacy to include cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as the ability to engage with multiple modes of communication.

The concept of multiliteracies emerged to describe the multiplicity of communication channels involved in meaning-making. The New London Group (1996) introduced the idea of multiliteracies to account for two principal changes in literacy: first, extending the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for the context of culturally and linguistically diverse societies; and second, accounting

for the variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This highlights the need for literacy to encompass multiple modes and media in the teaching and learning process.

Educators and researchers are exploring multiliteracies across educational settings, from primary schools to higher education. Multiliteracies pedagogy emphasizes that literacy must account for linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial modes of meaning, known as multimodality (Adami, 2015). Researchers have adapted multiliteracies to include explicit discussions of multimodality, which extends the definition of texts beyond linguistic-dominant forms to those comprised of multiple modes (Jewitt, 2009). Multimodality examines how different semiotic modes, which have distinct potentials and limitations for communication (Kress, 2010), work together to create meaning.

Aligning with the development of multimodality, the latest curriculum of the Indonesian education system, known as *Kurikulum Merdeka*, states that one of the objectives of the English subject is to develop communicative competence in English including various multimodal texts-- *pembelajaran difokuskan pada teks, dalam berbagai moda, baik lisan, tulisan, visual, audio, maupun multimodal* (BSKAP, 2022 p.5).

Multimodality, as a theory, provides a framework for approaching the process of meaning-making. Educators and researchers can consider a broader range of resources and practices by adopting a multimodal approach, as highlighted by Rowsell and Decoste (2012). This approach is gradually gaining recognition and utilization in ELT as teachers increasingly incorporate various semiotic modes into their teaching (Marissa and Hamid, 2022), resulting in many digital multimodal composing projects (Liang and Lim, 2018).

Digital multimodal composing (DMC) has emerged as a practice to prepare students for communication in this digital era. DMC refers to the process of composing texts that integrate multiple semiotic modes beyond just language,

such as images, audio, video, gestures, colors, fonts, and layouts (Yi et al., 2020). With digital technologies, these diverse modes can be combined in various ways. A study by Liang and Lim (2020) found that students enjoy and actively engage in digital multimodal composing activities. Using DMC, students can express their ideas and construct their identities through their products (Yarosh, et al. 2016).

However, effectively implementing DMC in classrooms poses particular challenges such as when teachers need more training in multiliteracies pedagogy and assessment (Li, 2020). Educators also need more guidance on scaffolding and giving feedback on multimodal compositions (Unsworth & Mills, 2020). Researchers have proposed models for assessing multimodal compositions in ways that account for their elements. These include focusing on design elements, rhetorical awareness, and technological literacies demonstrated in students' texts (Anderson et al., 2006; Hung et al., 2013). This multiliteracies pedagogy highlights the need to teach diverse modes of meaning-making today.

Students should learn how different modes complement each other and make rhetorical choices in designing multimodal texts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), and DMC provides opportunities for this critical analysis and creative composition. Implementing DMC effectively requires recognizing diverse channels of meaning-making combined to communicate messages (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). However, further research on pedagogical frameworks and assessments to guide the integration of DMC into classrooms is still needed.

Given the rising discussion on the use of DMC in EFL classrooms, it is suggested to identify effective teaching practices to help teachers implement DMC. This research addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on integrating digital multimodal composing in an EFL classroom at a secondary school in Indonesia. This study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge in English language teaching and digital multimodal composing by investigating the process

of integrating digital multimodal composing. The findings of this study provide insights into the integration of digital multimodal composing in EFL classrooms.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

Digital technologies have transformed communication and meaning-making practices today. To prepare students for participation in digitally-mediated societies, educators can try to integrate multimodal and multiliteracies pedagogy into English language teaching instructions (Jewitt, 2008; Mills, 2009). Digital multimodal composing (DMC), which involves creating texts using diverse semiotic modes and digital tools, is an emerging area of interest. However, effectively integrating DMC poses challenges for teachers (Archer, 2006; Hafner et al., 2015). More research is needed to understand how to use digital multimodal composing in ELT. This study aims to address these issues by examining a teacher's DMC practice in EFL classroom. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How does the teacher use digital multimodal composing in an English language classroom?
2. What benefits and challenges does the teacher have in using digital multimodal composing?

### **1.3. Objectives of the Research**

This study explores how a secondary school English teacher integrates DMC into his EFL classroom. It seeks to gain insights into the methods used to integrate multimodal composing into English language teaching. This study also identifies the benefits and challenges that the teacher faces when implementing DMC in the classroom. The findings illuminate the types of support and training needed to assist teachers in adopting multimodal teaching practices. Furthermore, this study aims to develop evidence-based recommendations for effective practices in using digital multimodal composing within EFL classroom. These

recommendations can inform teaching methods, materials, and training to promote multimodal instructions in Indonesian secondary schools.

#### **1.4. Significance of the Research**

Theoretically, this study contributes insights into how secondary school English teachers in Indonesia can incorporate DMC into their EFL classrooms. The findings enrich the understanding of current methods for integrating multimodal composing into English language teaching. This study also explores the benefits and challenges that teachers have in integrating multimodal teaching in their classrooms.

Practically, this study develops evidence-based recommendations for effective instructional practices in using DMC within secondary school English classes. These recommendations inform teaching methods, materials, and training to assist teachers in delivering multimodal instructions. The study also contributes to equip teachers with practical strategies and resources to enhance their skills and confidence in using digital multimodal composing.

By policy, the results of this study are expected to inform the development of educational policies and curricula that support the use of DMC in secondary schools in Indonesia. Insights from this study can guide professional development, resource allocation, and multimodal integration in English language programs.

#### **1.5. Definition of terms**

In the context of this study, several terms are defined as follows:

##### **1. Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC)**

Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC) is a pedagogical practice that facilitates the creation of meaning and communication of ideas through a combined use of written language, visual elements, audio, and other element using digital tools (Belcher, 2017). This practice underscores the

integration of technology in learning environments, utilizing digital tools such as software, platforms, and devices as pivotal to the composing process. DMC encourages students to explore and incorporate diverse modes including visuals (images, video, infographics, diagrams), audio (podcasts, soundtracks), and other interactive elements, thereby broadening their communicative capabilities (Li, 2021).

The use of DMC in education offers significant benefits for students, including improved engagement and motivation, particularly among those with creative expression and technology (Jenkins, 2018). Moreover, it cultivates critical thinking and communication skills as students analyze and integrate information from multiple sources to craft messages (Kress & Selander, 2016). This practice not only promotes digital literacy but also prepares students for the demands of future careers.

## 2. Literacy

Literacy traditionally refers to the ability to read and write, a fundamental skill essential for personal and societal development. Freire (1987) expands this definition, viewing literacy as a cultural dimension that encompasses how individuals produce, transform, and reproduce meaning within their societal contexts. This perspective highlights that literacy is not just about decoding text but involves a broader engagement with communication and meaning-making within various cultural settings.

Literacy empowers individuals to access information, express their thoughts and ideas, and engage critically with the world around them (Scribner & Cole, 1981). It enables individuals to make informed decisions, pursue educational and career opportunities, and contribute meaningfully to their communities (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Literacy is not a static skill but rather a dynamic and evolving set of competencies that adapt to the changing demands of society and technology (Leu et al., 2004).

In the digital age, literacy includes the ability to navigate, evaluate, and create information using various digital tools and platforms (Gilster, 1997). This expanded definition recognizes that literacy is not confined to reading and writing but extends to critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication in diverse contexts (Tyner, 1998).

### 3. Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies refers to a comprehensive approach to literacy education that acknowledges the diverse modes of communication and meaning-making in contemporary societies. It moves beyond the traditional focus on written language to encompass the increasing role of visual, audio, gestural, and spatial modes in communication (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This expanded understanding of literacy is crucial in a world where digital technologies have transformed how we create, share, and consume information (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

A key characteristic of multiliteracies is the recognition that people use a variety of modes, not just written text, to communicate and make meaning (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). These modes include visuals, such as images, videos, and infographics; audio, such as music, podcasts, and speeches; gestures, such as body language and facial expressions; and spatial design, such as the layout of a website or the organization of a classroom. Effective communication often involves understanding and using these modes appropriately in different contexts (Mills, 2016). Multiliteracies also emphasize that different communities and cultures have their own unique ways of communicating and expressing themselves (Early et al., 2015). By acknowledging this diversity, multiliteracies foster respect for and understanding of different perspectives and worldviews (Hafner, 2015).

Furthermore, digital technologies have fundamentally reshaped how we interact with information and with each other (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

Multiliteracies encourage critical and creative engagement with digital media, such as social media, online games, and mobile apps (Gee, 2017). This includes developing the ability to evaluate the credibility of information online, to participate responsibly in online communities, and to create and share our own digital content. Multiliteracies has significant implications for education, calling for teachers to create learning environments that integrate diverse modes of communication (Unsworth & Mills, 2020). By embracing multiliteracies, educators can prepare students to be effective communicators and critical thinkers.

#### **1.6. Organization of the Research**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provides background information on the research by introducing the research questions, objectives, significance, definitions of key terms, and the overall structure. The second chapter reviews relevant theories informing this study. The third chapter outlines the research methodology, including the research design, participants, data collection procedures, and analysis. The fourth chapter presents the findings from the data analysis and discusses the findings in relation to the research questions and literature. Finally, the fifth chapter summarizes the overall conclusions of the study and offers recommendations for future research.