

# THE IMPACT OF MULTIMODAL TEXTS ON HIGH SCHOOL EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** The effects of multimodal texts on learning and teaching English and culture have been emphasized. However, not many studies on the topic were conducted in the Vietnamese context. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate (1) the impact of multimodal texts on Vietnamese EFL high school students' perception and (2) high school students' responses to the cultural input in learning culture. The study was designed as an experimental study, following a mixed-methods approach, using the pre-and-post- questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews to collect quantitative and qualitative data. 135 high school students took part in this investigation as participants. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in high school students' perception of culture and communication. The participants in the study also highly perceived the positive effects of multimodal texts on their English language learning. Finally, some implications were drawn from the findings so as to enhance the quality of culture and communication teaching and learning at the upper secondary level.

**Key words:** Multimodal texts, culture and communication, language teaching and learning, students' perceptions, high school English textbooks

## 1. Introduction

Language has been around since human beings started to communicate with one another for their daily life needs. The relationship between language and culture is definitely a concern in the process of language teaching and learning. An effective communication requires not only communicative competence but also appropriate cultural competence in order to avoid miscommunication (Thanasoulas, 2001). English language has become an international language or *lingua franca*, so English language education should involve both cultures from English-speaking countries and diverse cultures around the world in order to help learners to become intercultural competent in communication (Roberts *et al.*, 2001, p.30; Tran & Seepho, 2014). McKay (2003a) stated that the cultural information in English language teaching (ELT) materials has to be closely connected to the culture of countries. Heiko (2018) argued that teaching materials play an important role in providing communicative orientation points for learners. It also directs learners to talk and write in the classroom and in social communication. That is, all senses of culture need to be emphasized in the ELT curriculum and textbooks so that learners can develop intercultural and linguistic competence as well as communicative competence. Nevertheless, English language teaching in Vietnamese classroom contexts mainly focuses on the development of reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar for the purposes of passing the final exams. Many English textbooks used in ASEAN countries for teaching English are found to cover mainly language competence, and cultural content is not specific to the context of ASEAN

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cultures (Tran & Duong, 2015). They indicated that the content of new English textbooks should focus on not only cultures from English speaking countries but also other cultures around the world. In terms of teaching culture, Vietnamese teachers must feature this social communicative context. In so doing, the teaching of culture will help students to develop sets of skills and knowledge in order for them to be able to have successful interaction with the native speaker (Doan, 2014). Although the Communication and Culture section focusing on culture is added in the new textbooks, no clear intercultural objectives were officially presented in teachers' lesson plans (Chau and Truong, 2018). To solve this problem, Alptekin (1993) argued that teachers should be aware of cultural differences and try to develop learners' awareness of such differences through discussions and supplementary materials, rather than relying solely on textbooks. They can use various cultural-comparison activities focused on the C1, the C2 and other cultures through texts, pictures and video-clips to develop the intercultural sensitivity of their students. Gajek (2019) suggested that multimodal texts allow for purposeful use of technology, which becomes a means of cultural expression and intercultural communication and linguistic activity in a multisemiotic environment. However, there has been very little research conducted on the effect of multimodal texts on students' learning culture and communication in Vietnam. Therefore, the current study aims to address this gap by investigating the impact of using multimodal texts on students' perceptions in learning culture and communication. It also examines their responses to the cultural knowledge via multimodal texts. The results in this study can be used for better practicing and planning of teaching culture and communication in Vietnamese high school context. More specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does the use of multimodal texts influence high school EFL learners' perceptions of culture and communication?
2. What are high school EFL students' responses to the use of multimodal texts in learning culture?

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Culture and communication**

Language and culture coexist, and culture is an indispensable part of the communication process. Culture is incorporated mainly to the extent that it reinforces and enriches, not that it puts in question, traditional boundaries of self and other. In practice, teachers teach language and culture, or culture in language, instead of teaching language as culture (Kramsch, 1995). Because the target culture shapes the target language itself, cultural characteristics transferred to the language environment may have a positive impact on the linguistic message. As Tseng (2002) argued that language competence is determined not only by accurate grammar, but also by appropriate use of language in particular contexts for communication. Culture plays a crucial role in encoding and decoding the messages among communications. Therefore, it is very important to develop cultural knowledge for language learners to avoid misunderstanding in social interaction.

Communication is no longer associated with mere verbal language. It involves the use of multiple sources of information in visual and oral forms such as images, videos, audios, gestures, which are referred to as multimodal texts. For effective communication, people need to be aware of and read from all these resources. They should develop a greater awareness of the effects of the choice of a given semiotic resource over others, as well as the combination of two

or more resources to the audience. Celce-Murcia (2008) argued that language learners need to have knowledge about grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse competence and multimodal literacy to be proficient in English in today's world (Jewitt & Kress, 2003).

## **2.2. Multimodal texts**

In the current mobile communication context, especially with the advancement of technology, texts often involve more than one mode to communicate meaning. A verbal text is extended by visual, sound or hypertexts that link the main words and phrases of a text to further content are described as multimodal texts (Hallet, 2014, 2015; Ryan, 2004). Serafini (2012) said “multimodal texts present information across a variety of modes including visual images, design elements, written language, and other semiotic resources” (p.27). According to the social semiotics perspective, multimodal texts can be defined as any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic mode (VanLeeuwen, 2006, p.40). Students can interpret meaning from different symbols in the semiotic system, (Anstey & Bull, 2006, p.25). There are five elements which comprise a semiotic system, including visual, spatial, linguistic, gestural and audio. These types of multimodal texts help students make sense of what they learn better.

### **2.2.1. The role of multimodal texts in language teaching**

According to Serafini (2012) “multimodal texts present information across a variety of modes including visual images, design elements, written language, and other semiotic resources” (p.27). This respective literacy is labelled ‘multimodal literacy’, which refers to the competence to critically understand texts that are composed of various modes and a multitude of cultural and linguistic components (New London Group, 1996). Moreover, Yusof *et al.* (2017) indicated that teachers should be prepared to use multimodal text for language teaching. Multimodal texts provide learners of the target language with not only real-life situations, but also cultural values of the second language by using visual communication devices such as images, videos, audio and so on. These types of multimodal texts are aimed at language learners who learn better by visual communication rather than being lectured by the teacher.

### **2.2.2. The benefits of multimodal texts in teaching culture and communication**

Using multimodal materials in the teaching and learning process, helps learners gain multiple benefits (Cercamo, Cartes, Velasquez & Larenas, 2016). The New London Group (1996) argued that besides traditional reading and writing skills, students needed to develop a broader set of literacies to be able to cope with the multiple modes of meaning making (e.g. visuals, gestures, spatial disposition) that characterize the texts produced in the digital age. Burke and Rowsell (2007) stated that new forms of communication require different skills more than just print texts. According to Moreno and Mayer (2007), language learners can learn better from a combination of pictures and words than from words alone. Moreover, the visual representation of content is vital for communicating and improving students’ understanding of subject matter. Words contain written and spoken text while pictures consist of animation, video, and graphic images. The combination of words and pictures at the same time provide more information that the brain processes in its working memory (Liu, 2013).

Additionally, the awareness of the intercultural environment is very important in EFL classes. Cultural knowledge is significantly emphasized in English teaching and learning. Kramsch (1993) stressed that cultural instructions should be an integral part of language teaching curricula and should include intercultural activities considering culture as an interpersonal

phenomenon. Jiying (2004) supported that the best strategy for integrating culture and language would be the cultural context. A teacher may adopt any of these approaches while teaching a foreign language. The use of multimodal text can bring advantages to the learners as the text is the combination of two or more modes such as written language, spoken language, video, audio, gesture, and spatial. Hanif and Wiedarti (2021) proposed that English teachers should switch from traditional learning to modern learning using digital media. Teachers can maximize their learners' reading skills using various modes of text. Multimodal text can also increase learners' motivation, new experiences, instructional content, and provide cultural diversity information. Therefore, teachers should integrate culture in language to impart awareness about various cultures in the world. This facilitates the learners to be competent in language use in a cultural context.

The use of multimodal communication products can make learning activities more interesting. Sumardi and Drajadi (2019) said that multimodal materials stimulated student's creativity and imagination. Their learning vocabulary process was also supported by using multimodal texts. They also confirmed that when using these materials students became more enthusiastic and interested in learning English. All of them looked happy when reading the text from the screen. Also, they hoped that teachers would use these materials in the next lessons. Moreno and Mayer (2007) also maintained that combination of pictures and words helps people learn better than using only words. In fact, pictures consist of animation, video, and graphic images which provide more information that the brain processes in its working memory than only written and spoken words. Having the same idea, January (2018) stated that the text which provided some pictures is more interesting and it encourages students to read the whole text from the beginning to the end. They also help them to guess the topic, main idea, etc. In other words, giving a text which contains visual images is one of the strategies to attract the students to find the main idea and specific information from the text.

It is important to engage students with multimodal texts in order to help them develop vital multimodal literacy skills. Teachers should guide students with skills and strategies for navigating and interpreting visual design elements to interpret and comprehend the meaning underlying different modes of texts. Additionally, teachers need to become more knowledgeable about the types of texts being read, the skills and strategies required to be successful, and the social contexts in which learning takes place.

### **2.3. English language teaching in Vietnamese high schools**

English language has been officially taught as a compulsory foreign language at high schools throughout the country, and its role has been changed alongside Vietnam's history and economic growth. However, English language teaching in many Vietnamese classroom contexts tend to focus mainly on the development of reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar for the purposes of passing the final exams (Tran & Duong, 2018). Recently, the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project (now referred to as NFLP) has an ultimate objective that by 2020 most Vietnamese young people graduating from secondary vocational schools, colleges and universities will be able to use a foreign language confidently in their daily communication. They are able to study and work in an integrated, multicultural and multilingual environment, making foreign languages a competitive advantage of the Vietnamese people (Hoang, 2016, p.12). Particularly, the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are integrated in

communicative texts or activities. Language learners need to have the ability to comprehend and construct utterances accurately and appropriately in various social and cultural contexts (Ton Nu & Murray, 2020, p.5). Ton Nu and Murray (2020) suggested that language teachers in Vietnam could have plans for supplementing because of the limitations of this textbook series in terms of communication. In addition, they have to make their lesson plans innovative, fun, or anything involving cultural knowledge. However, a study conducted by Thai and Le (2020) revealed that many Vietnamese EFL teachers were sufficiently unfamiliar with several cultural aspects such as literature, ethnic groups, music, drama, art and so on. Besides that, some students found it hard to explain and expressed the lack of confidence when talking about these culture topics. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the need to teach cultural knowledge in the classroom. To be feasible, the EFL high school teacher should be a guide to help students compare, contrast, and explore cultural differences among social communities.

#### **2.4. Related studies**

Ajayi (2009) carried out a study which concerned the significance of the affordances of multimodality in contemporary conceptualizations of ESL/literacy pedagogies. Using a cellular phone advertisement, 18 students composed visual representations of their understandings of the text. The findings revealed that multimodal texts afforded the students opportunities for diverse interpretations and representations of visual images based on the interplay of self-identity and social-cultural worlds.

Ganapathy (2016) conducted a study to investigate the effects and students' perspectives on the use of underlying the Multiliteracies theory. In this study, focus group interview is used as an instrument to collect the data that examines the effectiveness of ESL teaching and learning using the Multimodal approaches on literacy in meaning-making. Participants included 15 students in a private school in Penang, Malaysia. The results confirmed multimodal pedagogical practices promote positive learning outcomes in teaching and learning of ESL. This study implied that the multimodal approaches integrated in the teaching and learning of ESL have the capacity to facilitate students' autonomy in learning, improve motivation to learn and promote various learning styles.

Hadianto *et al.* (2021) conducted a study in Indonesia context to see the role of using multimodal texts based on local cultural content to improve the literacy skills of BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) learners. This study was a single subject experimental method with research design A-B-A. The instruments included multimodal text with the theme of communication culture, observation sheets, and communication skills assessment sheets. Participants in this study were four BIPA learners from various professions including students, employees, entrepreneurs, and housewives. The finding demonstrated that they could develop their literacy skills including verbal and non-verbal communication.

Dang and Seals (2016) conducted a study to evaluate four main sociolinguistic aspects: teaching approach, bilingualism, language variations, and intercultural communication reflected in the primary English textbooks. The evaluation findings indicate that the textbook design follows communicative language teaching. However, English variations and cross-cultural knowledge are still limited in the textbook design. Although some signs of bilingualism are recognized in the teachers' books, it is not clear whether bilingualism or double monolingualism is encouraged by the textbook writers.

Vu and Febrianti's study (2018) aimed to explore the roles of the visual resources drawn from an English textbook in Vietnamese schools, and the teachers' reflections on their use of those visuals in teaching practice. A qualitative approach was employed in this study with using in-depth interviews as the instrument. Participants consist of 9 lower secondary school teachers of English in a northern province of Vietnam including 6 females and 3 males. The findings suggested that the multimodal nature of the text should be paid more attention to contribute to meaningful learning activities. The study also revealed that although the teachers are aware of the essential roles of visual images in their English classrooms, their exploitation of images is still limited as resources contributing to context introduction, interest engagement, illustration. They still remained that language alone fully represents the meanings encoded and communicated in the written texts.

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **3.1. Research designs**

The current study was designed as an experimental study, using a mixed method approach by combining both qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions. The quantitative including pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire is aimed to investigate whether the impact of using multimodal text on EFL students' perception in learning culture and communication. The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interview with 5 students chosen randomly from the group, which is hoped to obtain more insightful information.

#### **3.2. Participants**

This study investigates 135 EFL grade 10 students (54 males and 81 females) from two high schools in Mekong Delta in academic year 2021 - 2022. They are willing to participate on a voluntary basis as the population in this study. The participants' age ranged from 16 to 17. They have been learning English as a foreign language since grade 3. The number of participants in each grade level was 34 to 40. Currently, they have learnt the new English textbook 10, which consists of 10 units and 4 reviews.

#### **3.3. Research instruments and procedure**

The data collection process was conducted in 8 weeks with pre-questionnaire, experiment, post-questionnaire, and semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was divided into three clusters. Cluster 1 comprises 30 statements regarding students' perception towards culture and communication in English learning. Cluster 2 consists of 15 statements investigating students' evaluation of multimodal texts on learning Culture and Communication. The last cluster includes 8 statements exploring their references and suggestions on how multimodal texts can be brought into the classrooms. Pre-questionnaire is used to investigate the students' perception in learning culture and communication before the intervention. Then, 6 lesson plans integrating multimodal texts were applied in the intervention. The multimodal texts, which are closely connected to the lesson content, students' knowledge and time constraint, were selected in the intervention. The texts including words combine with images, symbols, speech, gesture, gaze, body posture, movement, and so on. These materials provide clear context for verbal and nonverbal communication which are characteristics of the target culture in focus in the unit. After the experiment, post-questionnaire was used to check the effects of multimodal texts on EFL high school students' perception in learning culture and communication. In addition, semi-structured

interviews including 5 questions were prepared into Vietnamese so that the participants could understand clearly and give their opinion insightfully. Finally, data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed using the software SPSS. Qualitative interview data were analyzed following frequently identified themes and topics.

### 3.4. Data analysis method

#### 3.4.1. Data from questionnaire

The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed through the following steps. First, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked through Reliability Statistical Analysis. Second, descriptive statistics tests were computed to measure the mean scores. Finally, the received information was submitted to SPSS for data quantitative analysis.

#### 3.4.2. Data from interview

Similar to the collected data from questionnaire, to gain a more insightful and comprehensive understanding of the participants’ responses, the information gained from interviews also followed the analysis procedures. First, after the interviews were carried out, the information was transcribed. In addition, the researcher read the transcripts several times to clearly understand the interviewees’ opinion. Next, the transcript interviews were returned to the interviewees for clarification and validation. After that, data from interviews were scrutinized for common themes and topics under analysis.

## 4. Findings and discussions

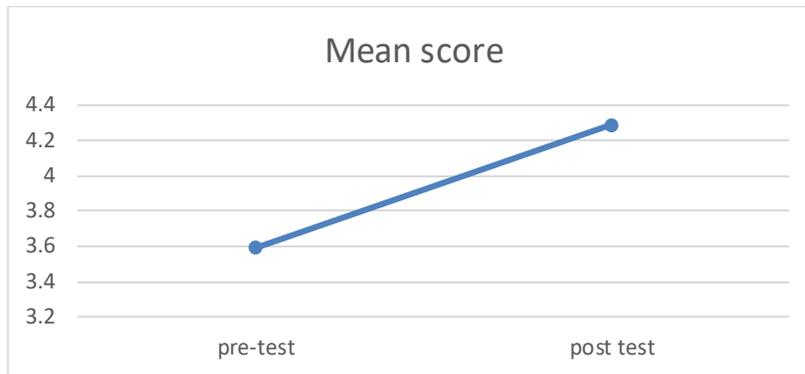
### 4.1. EFL High school students’ perceptions before and after the study

**Table 4.1.** Descriptive Statistics of the mean scores of the questionnaire

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
preMean	135	2.44	4.33	3.59	.27692
postMean	135	3.74	4.72	4.29	.17326

Table 4.1 displays the results of the descriptive statistics test, which was run to examine the average mean of participants’ perceptions scores before and after the study. Then, a pair sample t-test was run to check whether the participants were different in terms of their perceptions before and after the study. According to the Scale test results, there was a significant difference between the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire results of the participants’ perception in this study. Specifically, the results of the participants after the intervention were higher than the results before intervention ( $M_{pre} = 3.59$ ;  $M_{post} = 4.29$ ;  $\rho = .00$ ). In other words, the two means before and after the study were different. Besides, Cohen’s d value ( $d=2.284$ ) indicated that there was a strong interaction between the intervention and post-test results. It means that the intervention significantly affected the distinction between their results before and after the study.

Then, a Generalized Linear Model for Repeated Measures test was run to check the progress of the participants’ perceptions within the group from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire. Figure 4.1 portrays the change of participants’ perceptions from the pre-test to the post-test.



**Figure 4.1.** Participants' perception before and after the intervention

According to the test results, the participants had better perceptions after the treatment ( $F=704.455$ ;  $p=.00$ ). And the effect size indicated a large effect, (partial eta squared = .84). In other words, the treatment considerably affected the change in the group according to their perceptions before and after the intervention.

#### **4.2. The effect of multimodal texts on students' perceptions in learning culture before and after the study**

##### **4.2.1. EFL high school students' perceptions towards culture and communication after the intervention**

The first purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of multimodal texts on EFL high school students' perceptions in learning culture and communication. Table 4.2 reports the Descriptive statistics of the results of their perception change in each cluster before and after the study.

**Table 4.2.** The descriptive statistics of mean scores of questionnaires in each cluster

	preMean	SD	postMean	SD
Students' perception towards culture and communication	3.63	.29756	4.27	.18638
The impact of multimodal texts on high school students' perception in learning culture	3.54	.30677	4.2947	.20154
Students' responses to the cultural input	3.58	.39654	4.35	.25607

The responses to the statements in Part 1 (from Item 1 to Item 30) provide the data on their perception toward culture and communication and the necessity of learning culture. The Descriptive statistics test was performed to get insight into students' viewpoints about related issues being questioned in the cluster. Regarding the way students perceived cultural learning importance, the table illustrated that they had a better attitude about cultural knowledge in language learning as well as its vital role in social communication after the intervention. Besides, participants highly perceived that meanings come from combinations of semiotics resources in context with the highest efficiency. The message can be affected by many things such as emotions, gestures, cultural contexts and the medium used to communicate.

The results indicated that the total mean scores of the Cluster 1 on students' perception of culture and communication after the intervention was higher than before one ( $N=135$ ;  $M_{1pre}=3.63$ ;  $M_{1post}=4.27$ ).

A pair sample t-test was run to check whether the participants were different in terms of their perceptions about culture and communication before and after the study. The results showed that there was a significant difference between two mean scores of the participants' perception

( $t=-22.08$ ;  $p=.00$ ). Based on the test results, the participants highly perceived the effect of multimodal texts in the intervention.

**4.2.2. EFL students’ evaluation towards the use of multimodal texts on learning culture and communication**

The responses to the statements in Part 2 (from Item 31 to Item 53) provide the data on their evaluation about the use of multimodal texts in learning culture. The data revealed that the total mean score of Cluster 2 is higher after the intervention ( $M_{2pre}=3.54$ ;  $M_{2post}=4.29$ ). Table 4.3 reports the descriptive statistics of the results on the evaluation of EFL high school students in terms of getting meaning from the multimodal texts.

**Table 4.3.** The descriptive statistics on the impact of multimodal texts on meaning-making

Items	preMean	SD	postMean	SD
31. It helps me to understand how to do things and behave in different social interactions.	3.48	.66750	4.22	.55539
32. I can expose myself to various non-verbal modes (facial expression, gestures, movement) to comprehend the meaning easily.	3.38	.70165	4.16	.46049
36. The images that accompany the texts prove useful to getting the meaning of the text.	3.72	.68491	4.26	.52119
39. I am able to get the meaning of the text thanks to the images, gestures and audio, which accompany the texts.	3.60	.73400	4.40	.52257
44. Multimodal texts integrating in the lesson helps me to perceive information and construct knowledge more easily.	3.68	.55270	4.12	.46408

The participants highly appreciate that they can decode the exact meaning of the texts thanks to the images, gestures and audio, which accompany the texts. By exposing themselves to various non-verbal modes such as facial expression, gestures, movement, images, they can comprehend the textual meaning more easily than written texts alone.

Additionally, a pair sample t-test was run to check whether the mean score before the study 3.54 (high) ( $N=135$ ;  $M_{2pre}=3.54$ ) and the mean score after the study 4.29 (very high) ( $N=135$ ;  $M_{2post}=4.29$ ) by Oxford (1990) was different. The results indicated that the two means were different ( $t=-24.15$ ;  $p=0.00$ ). Students' attitudes towards the impact of multimodal texts in their perceptions in learning culture were changed from high level to very high level (according to Oxford scale, 1990).

The qualitative data from the interview also brought many significant findings. First, learning culture via multimodal texts enhanced their understanding about the cultural knowledge in the lessons. Students 1 said:

*“...In my opinion, multimodal texts have a positive impact in terms of culture and communication in my study. They help me to understand culture and communication more easily. [...] Besides, they closely follow the content of the lesson, so it makes it easier for me to grasp the knowledge of the lesson. [...]*

While student 2 added:

*“[...] multimodal texts have an effect on my cultural learning and communication. Instead of learning via written text with long words and a lot of vocabulary, I can understand when learning on multimodal texts with images, sounds, and specific illustrations, which help me to visualize the culture of these countries, their customs and habits more easily.”*

As can be seen from the above except, student 2 also acknowledged one important role of learning the culture via multimodal texts, which is supporting learners to gain comprehend the

lesson topic as well as cultural content in the learning progress. It means that meaning-making is not only conveyed through language, but also through different modes in semiotic systems such as visual, spatial, linguistic, gestural and audio. Learning cultural knowledge via multimodal texts also enhances the participants' imagination to the word meaning more specific which is echoed by students 4 and 5 in their claims during the interviews. This is shown in 2 quotes by the participants below:

*"Yes sir, multimodal text has an impact on my English learning. When I look at pictures accompanying words or sounds and actions in the video, it will be easier for me to imagine the lesson content and the culture of that country more specifically and clearly".* (Student 4)

*"In terms of culture and communication, the multimodal text has an impact on my English learning because it presents the information more specifically and helps me understand easily."* (Student 5)

Second, multimodal texts help high school students to raise a better awareness toward cultural learning, which is beneficial to their communication and interaction with the people from other cultures. Specifically, turning to how students evaluated the impact of multimodal texts in learning cultural contents, most of the items mentioned were highly agreed by the students for statements 45, 46 and 50, which is presented in Table 4.4. It can be seen that the mean scores for these three items significantly increase after the intervention.

**Table 4.4.** The descriptive statistics on the impact of multimodal texts on cultural awareness

Items	preMean	SD	postMean	SD
45. Multimodal texts integrating in the lesson helps me understand the target culture more easily.	3.54	.76019	4.22	.47222
46. Multimodal texts integrating in the lesson help me recognize cultural differences more clearly.	3.52	.58373	4.39	.51971
47. Materials are provided with appropriate language (eg. terms, expressions, structures, stress, intonations, etc.) used in different communicative situations.	3.47	.76128	4.30	.53635
48. I have a chance to be exposed to posters /pictures/ ornaments illustrating aspects of the foreign culture.	3.13	.80854	3.92	.64217
49. I can easily distinguish the similarities between the home and foreign cultures.	3.45	.76063	4.42	.55370
50. I can recognize cultural differences more easily from a combination of pictures, video, audio and words than from words alone.	3.48	.77124	4.34	.49116
51. Multimodal texts provide me with knowledge of the target language with not only real-life situations, but also cultural values of the target language by using visual communication devices such as images, videos, audio and so on.	3.59	.71546	4.39	.51971
52. Multimodal texts help me realize that communication and culture can be represented in a multidimensional - various modes, not just in written texts .	3.66	.70181	4.45	.50019
53. Multimodal texts help me see that information about culture can come from different sources such as visual, audio, video, etc.	3.63	.75910	4.52	.50119

As illustrated in Table 4.4, the data showed that the participants can recognize aspects of the foreign culture more clearly. They also have a better understanding about the similarities and differences among these cultures via the various modes which form a combination of pictures, video, audio and words. In addition, participants realized that communication and culture can be represented in different sources such as visual, audio, video, etc., not just in written texts. These

sources provide the knowledge of the target language with not only real-life situations, but also cultural values of the target language by using visual communication devices such as images, videos, audio and so on.

The interview data provided further explanation. In fact, EFL high school students assumed that learning via multimodal texts is a good way to explore the culture of other countries. Student 3 expressed:

*“Multimodal texts help me learn and understand English more easily, faster and better related to the cultural topic of other countries. [...] I can imagine their culture, customs, their daily life... uhm... it is easier for me to remember these kinds of culture which they belong to.”*

Having the same ideas, students 1, 2 and 4 agreed:

*“When I see images, videos and sound combined with texts, which help me to learn and grasp cultural knowledge easily.”* (student 1)

*“If I see the texts accompanied with images, sounds or clips, I will recognize and understand knowledge and culture of other people, other countries more exactly...more specifically than read on a long-written text”.* (student 2)

*“[...] It will be easier for me to imagine the lesson content and the cultural features of these countries more specifically and clearly.”* (student 4)

Supporting this idea, student 5 added:

*“[...] It is easier for me to visualize and understand the lesson clearly, especially about the culture, customs and habits of people that written texts cannot clearly present. Multimodal texts with text accompanied by images, sounds, and video clips help me see the communication in specific contexts. Therefore, I know what I should do and should not do in interaction with others.”*

It is clear that the use of multimodal text can bring advantages to the learners in learning culture as the texts are the combination of two or more modes such as written language, spoken language, video, audio, gesture, and spatial. The participants had a greater awareness of culture after exposure to multimodal texts.

Finally, the results of Descriptive statistics as in Table 4.5 show that the mean scores of these items after the study are much higher than before the study

**Table 4.5.** The descriptive statistics on the impact of multimodal texts on students’ learning engagement

Items	preMean	SD	postMean	SD
33. The cultural contents in the learning materials are interesting to learn.	3.57	.66317	4.32	.55758
35. I find multimodal texts in the intervention enjoyable and beneficial for my understanding.	3.62	.76164	4.24	.51058
38. Multimodal texts raise my motivation and participation during the lesson.	3.37	.77016	4.37	.49986
40. The culture presented in each section is very interesting.	3.42	.66401	4.31	.57907
41. The culture content presented in each section is closely related to the theme or topic of the unit.	3.49	.68973	4.11	.36756
42. I prefer to learn with texts accompanied by different types of modes such as audio, video, spatial, images, gaze.	3.90	.78106	4.62	.48470
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>.30677</b>	<b>4.29</b>	<b>.20154</b>

Based on the test results, the data indicate that the investigated students have positive attitudes to the use of multimodal texts in learning culture and communication. They found that multimodal texts help them pay attention in their learning rather than learning with written texts. Multimodal texts presented in learning materials are very interesting for them to learn and to increase their motivation during the lessons (M33pre=3.57; M38pre=3.37 and M33post=4.32;

M38post=4.37, respectively). The data also reveal that participants prefer to learn with texts accompanied by different types of modes such as audio, video, spatial, images, gaze (M42pre=3.90; M42post=4.29). Multimodal texts are a useful source for their comprehension because they are closely connected to the unit (M35pre=3.62; M41pre=4.49 and M35post=4.24; M41post=4.11, respectively).

Regarding the students' engagement in learning with multimodal texts, the interview data demonstrate that EFL high school students believed that multimodal texts create interest, make clear the cultural content and make them feel excited in their learning. Below are several typical explanations provided by participants:

*"The knowledge in the lesson is very concise since it does not have many words. There is a combination of texts with pictures, images, sounds, which makes me feel excited when learning new knowledge. I think it is a very good way to use this technique to convey the information and present knowledge to students."* (student 2)

*"I feel that the information provided through images, videos, and sounds in the lesson is fun and interesting, which helps me comprehend cultural knowledge more easily. It presents the lesson content more specifically than learning with written words."* (student 5)

Similarly, student 4 proposed,

*"For the use of multimodal texts into the classroom, I think it is a good way to teach cultural learning and communication. Instead of studying with long texts, multimodal texts help learners to be more interested in the classroom. Personally, I believe that it is a good way to raise students' interest in the learning process...."*

As clearly seen in the excerpts, participants acknowledged the vital role of multimodal texts in creating positive attitudes for them to engage in the lessons. They also expressed that learning via multimodal texts is a new way to learn more effectively than written one, it is seen in the following example:

*"Yes, I see that source of knowledge through those multimodal texts is fun, new, and appropriate for my understanding. It creates a positive impact on teaching and learning rather than just writing on the board in the traditional way."* (student 1)

*"Yes, I find the cultural knowledge which was used in the lesson very interesting. It helps me to acquire and perceive cultural knowledge more easily and effectively. [...] Yes, I think it's great to use multimodal texts in the classroom, it's very beneficial because sometimes learning about these cultures with written texts alone is very boring. Learning with written texts is harder for me to understand than learning with multimodal texts...".* (Student 3)

From the findings from the interview data, it is obvious that EFL high school students agreed that multimodal texts have a positive effect on their perception in learning culture. The participants strongly agreed that teaching culture by using multimodal texts is very essential. Consequently, the results from the qualitative data matched that of the quantitative data.

#### **4.2.3. EFL students' preference and suggestions how multimodal texts brought into classroom**

The researcher employed a descriptive statistics test to check the participants' reference and their suggestions about how multimodal texts were brought into the classroom. The test results show the total mean scores of the Cluster 3 after the intervention is much higher than the previous one (preMclus3=3.58; postMclus3=4.35). Then, a pair sample t-test was run to examine whether the two mean scores were different. The Scale test results indicated that the two means were different ( $t=-20.97$ ;  $p=.00$ ). The results indicated that participants had a greater appreciation of these multimodal texts on their learning culture. They proposed that multimodal texts in the

lessons are presented clearly and appropriate for them to understand (M59pre=3,48; M59post=4.36). Besides, the data also showed their highest appreciation for the support of illustrated videos in learning culture from Youtube among these sources of multimodal texts such as picture books and Powerpoint (M56post=4.54). Moreover, they highly agreed that multimodal texts are effective in learning culture and communication since they help learners to raise awareness towards cultures around the world in order to communicate more effectively. Table 4.6 illustrates the test results.

**Table 4.6.** The Descriptive statistics on students’ preference and suggestions how multimodal texts brought into classroom

Items	preMean	SD	postMean	SD
54. A variety of different cultures is presented clearly in multimodal texts.	3.27	.70636	4.30	.50776
55. It is very interesting to learn culture and communication via multimodal texts.	3.52	.72100	4.40	.49172
56. Youtube is a great source for illustrated videos in learning culture.	3.89	.71523	4.54	.52856
57. Picture books are essential in learning target culture.	3.73	.67138	4.07	.69786
58. Multimodal texts in Powerpoint provide me with ideal conditions for developing my perception in learning culture and communication.	3.29	.65874	3.97	.66849
59. Multimodal texts accompanying the lessons are appropriate for me to understand.	3.48	.64475	4.36	.48265
60. Using multimodal texts is effective in learning culture and communication.	3.57	.67515	4.48	.50152
61. In general, using multimodal texts helped me to raise awareness towards cultures around the world in order to communicate more effectively with other people.	3.91	.65849	4.71	.45140
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>.39654</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>.25607</b>

In the interview data, participants also make some suggestions on how multimodal texts are brought into the classrooms. The point is that teachers should select the materials which are not only suitable but also closely connected with learner level and their background knowledge so that they can understand clearly. Student 1 said,

*“In my opinion, teachers should introduce knowledge closely related the unit content in an interesting way with something new. The content should be fun and interesting.”*

Similarly, student 3, 4 and 5 added,

*“I think teachers have to pay attention to the lesson objectives and the content should be appropriate with the student's level and their age. Therefore, it is easier for students to understand knowledge content. [...] Online sources like the Internet, Youtube will be good for learning about culture. It should include as many pictures as possible because too many words will cause interference.”* (student 3)

*“I feel the multimodal texts in the lesson are suitable for me. [...] I think teachers should choose content that is appropriate for students’ level and easy to understand in the classroom environment.”* (student 4)

*“In my opinion, the multimodal texts used in teaching culture should be appropriate to the student's level, and closely related to the topic, not all lessons are included. It should be fun and useful to comprehend the content of the lesson as well.”* (student 5)

In summary, the results from the collected data and analysis have indicated that the EFL high school students had better awareness of learning culture as its crucial role in global

communication after the study. They recognized that communication and culture can be represented in a multidimensional - various modes, not just in written texts. They also confirmed that the multimodal texts had positive impacts in supporting their learning progress in learning culture. Most of them believed that the multimodal texts are a useful, interesting and engaging technique to teaching and learning activities.

## 5. Conclusions and implications

In the study, the intervention positively affected EFL high school students' perception in learning culture and communication. Teaching cultural content brings to students some benefits to improve their cultural awareness, comprehension and learning engagement. Remarkably, participants expressed that they can decode the exact meaning of the texts thanks to the images, gestures and audio, which accompany the texts. Besides, multimodal texts help them to raise a better awareness of cultural learning, which is beneficial to their communication and interaction with the people from other cultures. Multimodal texts presented in learning materials are also very interesting for them to learn and to increase their motivation during the lessons. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the way culture sources are addressed as well as how culture is taught in the classroom since learners' motivation can be enhanced when learning via multimodal texts rather than print texts alone.

The findings from the current study reveal several pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, educational administrators as well as publishers with regard to the cultural content in ELT textbooks. To the EFL teachers, they should be aware of and include various kinds of texts in their teaching to help learners develop their culture knowledge and effectively apply them in real-life communication. Besides, the Department of Education and Training should organize various seminars, conferences, and workshops for EFL high school teachers about teaching culture in the new Tieng Anh textbooks to ensure that culture content is taught appropriately. Finally, publishers should include texts from various genres in their textbooks to create opportunities for learners not only to explore and interpret texts using multimodal resources but also to relate textual experiences to their own social-cultural experiences and perspectives.

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## TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA VIỆC SỬ DỤNG VĂN BẢN ĐA PHƯƠNG THỨC LÊN NHẬN THỨC CỦA HỌC SINH THPT VỀ VĂN HÓA VÀ GIAO TIẾP

**Tóm tắt:** Sự tác động của việc sử dụng ngữ liệu đa phương thức đối với việc học và dạy văn hóa trong tiếng Anh đã được nhấn mạnh trong một số nghiên cứu. Tuy nhiên, ở Việt Nam, chưa có nhiều nghiên cứu về chủ đề này. Do đó, nghiên cứu hiện tại nhằm mục đích điều tra (1) tác động của ngữ liệu đa phương thức đối với nhận thức của học sinh trung học phổ thông ở Việt Nam và (2) phản hồi của học sinh trung học phổ thông đối với những kiến thức được cung cấp qua văn bản đa phương thức trong việc học văn hóa. Nghiên cứu được thiết kế như một nghiên cứu thử nghiệm, theo phương pháp tổng hợp, sử dụng bảng câu hỏi trước và sau, và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc để thu thập dữ liệu định lượng và định tính. 135 học sinh trung học phổ thông đã tham gia cuộc điều tra này trong vai trò là đối tượng nghiên cứu. Kết quả cho thấy rằng khi sử dụng ngữ liệu đa phương thức, nhận thức của học sinh trung học về văn hóa và giao tiếp có sự cải thiện đáng kể. Bên cạnh đó, những học sinh tham gia cũng đánh giá cao các tác động tích cực của ngữ liệu đa phương thức đối với việc học ngôn ngữ. Trên cơ sở đó một số hàm ý được rút ra nhằm mục đích nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học văn hóa ở cấp trung học phổ thông.

**Từ khóa:** Văn bản đa phương thức, văn hóa và giao tiếp, dạy và học ngôn ngữ, nhận thức của học sinh, sách giáo khoa trung học phổ thông