

Research

## **Leveraging Multi-Modal Discourse Analysis for Effective Foreign Language Teaching to Non-Native Speakers**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the relationship between multi-modal discourse analysis and effective foreign language teaching to non-native speakers.

A mixed-methods approach was used to survey over 120 students in an English preparatory class ranging from A1 to C1 levels. We also had focus group discussions with additional 50 students still within the same levels of English preparatory class. Our findings reveal that students prefer an English Teacher who also speaks their indigenous language for ease of understanding. For example, majority of the Turkish students in the English Language preparatory class will be more comfortable having a Turkish-language speaking Teacher as their English Teacher. They claim that this is desirable because if they have any problems with understanding English vocabulary or grammar, the Turkish-speaking Teacher will explain in Turkish Language for ease of understanding.

However, while this approach appears to be an easy way out, it is actually crippling as it does not allow room for considerable and progressive foreign language immersion. The students end up not fully grasping the foreign language in totality as they fall back on vocabulary of their native language for a better understanding of the foreign language. This is a drawback that impedes effective learning. This is where Discourse Analysis comes to a relevant play. This study contributes to a potential growing body of research on how a foreign language Teacher can leverage Multi-Modal Discourse Analysis to effectively and successfully teach non-native speakers without the drama of recourse to an indigenous language.

**Keywords:** Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Foreign Language Teaching, Non-native speakers, Language immersion, Pedagogy

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### **Introduction**

The importance of effective foreign language teaching to non-native speakers cannot be overemphasized. There has been a growing demand of foreign language learning

as acquisition of such skills opens up unlimited opportunities locally and internationally. This is even more interesting as many of these opportunities are not just physical but also digital and one can take advantage of them from the comfort of one's home. Therefore, to successfully take advantage of the opportunities in the foreign language labor market, a holistic understanding and application of the language in question is critical. On the flip side, the foreign language Teacher has a pivotal role to play in facilitating seamless learning and eventual total language immersion.

In the light of the above, this study aims to investigate the relationship between Discourse Analysis and effective Foreign Language teaching to non-native speakers, with a focus on how the foreign language Teacher can integrate critical elements of Discourse in language teaching to facilitate understanding, assimilation and immersion without recourse to indigenous language. The study will also show how this approach further enhances meaningful student engagement.

### **Literature Review**

There are quite a good number of previous researches that have highlighted the importance of Discourse analysis in foreign language teaching.

*Horwitz* (1986) states that foreign language anxiety is a manifestation of self-perceptions, behaviors, emotions, and beliefs that are related to foreign language learning in the classroom setting. Students' poor performance and heightened anxiety remain significant concerns in the field of language education. In recent years, multimodal discourse analysis has been increasingly applied in foreign language education, with scholars recognizing its potential to improve students' motivation and confidence, as well as their overall academic success.

*Pham Ngoc Diem* (2025), postulates that applying multimodal discourse analysis in foreign language education, helps students to develop comprehensive communication skills, enhance employability and open doors to a wider range of job opportunities, both locally and internationally. According to him, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) provides a theoretical and practical framework to help students develop the ability to understand and use language in a variety of communicative situations including non-linguistic elements. He says that by integrating elements such as images, sounds, gestures and expressions into the teaching process, Multimodal Discourse Analysis helps students not only to gain a deeper understanding of language, but also grasp how language and non-linguistic elements combine to create meaning in communication.

*Edem Akbas, Asuman Asik, Neslihan Ozdemire, Sinem Dogruer, Seyda Selen & Bora Demir* (2022), in their book, **Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching**, emphasized the need to integrate Discourse Analysis into language teaching in order to create more motivating classroom settings in which the learners will have the awareness of the target language and will acknowledge the genuine pleasure of learning a foreign language. Their book presents different aspects of Discourse Analysis, underlining the importance of language in context rather than defining language only with its grammatical and linguistic properties.

**Li Hong**, (2012), acknowledged that the theoretical basis of the multimodal discourse analysis theory is a systemic functional linguistics developed by Michael Halliday and this theory advocates that other sign systems apart from language are also the sources of meaning. In the inter-personal communication, when one single mode cannot specify the speaker's meaning, other modes are needed to enhance and add more information to make the speaker's presentation of the meaning much clearer and more detailed, reaching the goal of being understood by the listener. When one mode cannot fully express its meaning, another mode or other modes are needed and the relationship between or among these modes is called complementary relationship.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted Mixed-methods approach. It was a combination of questionnaire administration and focus group discussions. Two respondent categories were targeted. The primary targets were students, 18 to 25 years of age in a University School of Foreign Languages English Preparatory Programme. And these are students between the A1 and C1 levels of English Language learning. One hundred & Twenty (120) students were surveyed and focus group discussions were conducted with additional 50 students. For the FGD, the 50 students were split into four (4) groups for effective feedback. The research questionnaire was designed to have open-ended questions to allow respondents to provide detailed, qualitative responses that can offer rich insights into their thoughts, feelings and experiences. It also gives room for flexibility as it allows respondents to express themselves freely, without being limited by pre-defined response options. To get the best out of the respondents, clear and concise language was used to ensure respondents understand what is being asked. Leading questions were avoided to refrain from influencing respondents' answers or introduce bias. Basically, the questions were limited to six (6), namely:

1. During foreign language teaching in class, what makes it easier for you to understand what the Teacher is teaching?
2. What do you enjoy most about learning a foreign language?
3. What foreign language(s) are you learning and why?
4. What aspect (s) of foreign language learning do you enjoy the most – listening, reading, speaking or writing?
5. Do you sometimes find the foreign language class boring? YES or NO
6. Why?

### The Result

Question	Response/Feedback
1. During foreign language teaching in class, what makes it easier for you to understand what the Teacher is teaching?	98% of Respondents stated that it is easier for them to understand when the teacher does the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Uses gestures</li> <li>b. Gives easy and practical examples</li> <li>c. Uses visual explanations</li> <li>d. Explains in a clear and simple manner</li> <li>e. Repeats important points</li> <li>f. Speaks slowly</li> <li>g. Is friendly and warm</li> <li>h. Uses interactive method of teaching</li> </ol> 2% said that when they prepare ahead of the lesson, it helps them understand better.
2. What do you enjoy most about learning a foreign language?	95% of Respondents said that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Learning a foreign language allows them an opportunity to interact with people from other countries/nationalities.</li> <li>b. They also stated that it gives them room to become bilingual, enjoy idioms, proverbs and vocabulary of another language.</li> <li>c. They said that they enjoy playing games with the target language</li> <li>d. For some, interaction with classmates makes learning fun</li> </ol>

	<p>e. Generally, they love it when they have speaking opportunities during the lesson.</p>
<p>3. What foreign language(s) are you learning and why?</p>	<p>a. 97% of the Respondents mentioned English Language as the language they are currently learning because passing the English Language preparatory class is a pre-requisite for their respective departments.</p> <p>b. 2% of them said they are learning English and German.</p> <p>c. 1% mentioned English, German and Spanish as the languages they are currently learning.</p> <p>d. And they all stated that English has a global appeal as it is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.</p> <p>e. It gives them better opportunities to advance their career, get a job and travel widely</p> <p>f. Some also mentioned that they have the intention of learning German and French Languages in the near future</p>
<p>4. What aspect (s) of foreign language learning do you enjoy the most...listening, reading speaking or writing?</p>	<p>a. 70% of them mentioned “reading” as their choice aspect of the target language</p> <p>b. 20% stated that “speaking” was the most enjoyable for them</p> <p>c. 9% quipped that their choice was “writing”</p> <p>d. And only 1% said listening was their favorite.</p> <p>e. They complained that listening was difficult for them because of the accent and pace (speed) of the audio</p>
<p>5. Do you sometimes find the foreign language class boring? YES or NO</p>	<p>a. 80% of them said that sometimes they find the foreign language class quite boring.</p> <p>b. And 20% said they find the foreign language class quite interesting and engaging</p>
<p>6. Why?</p>	<p>a. Out of the 80% who claimed they find the lesson boring, 60% said it was about the grammar and length of the</p>

	<p>lesson while the remaining 20% stated that they simply do not have the personal motivation to learn a new language.</p> <p>b. The 20% who find it interesting and engaging attribute this to personal motivation and teaching methods of the Instructor.</p>
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The secondary targets were Instructors/Lecturers of A1 to C1 students of a University School of Foreign Languages English Preparatory Programme. Some of these Lecturers have a Doctorate Degree in English Language Teaching, while many have a minimum of Master's Degree in English Language Teaching, Linguistics, or English Language (Major). They all have varying amount of experience in English Language Teaching with the minimum being 5 years. For this category of Respondents, questionnaires were administered and just like the student questionnaire, the research questionnaire for Instructors was designed to have open-ended questions to allow respondents provide detailed, qualitative responses that can offer rich insights into their thoughts, feelings as well as experiences. It also gives room for flexibility as it allows respondents to express themselves freely, without being limited by pre-defined response options. To get the best out of the respondents, clear and concise language was used to ensure respondents understand what is being asked. Leading questions were avoided to refrain from influencing respondents' answers or introduce bias. A total of 21 Lecturers were respondents to the questionnaire and basically, the questions were limited to five (5), namely:

1. When teaching a foreign language to non-native speakers, what approach/approaches do you use to ensure effective learning?
2. When students have a problem understanding certain vocabulary, phrase or sentence, what do you do to help them?
3. If students have a challenge comprehending or keeping pace with your accent, what do you do to assist?
4. Not every student enjoys learning a foreign language. How do you get students interested in learning the target language?
5. When students don't seem to remember the meaning of words, phrases or sentences that they have been taught, what do you do to help them?

**The Result**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response/Feedback</b>
<p>1. When teaching foreign language to non-native speakers, what approach/approaches do you use to ensure effective learning?</p>	<p>About 90% of Instructors said they adopt the following approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Tasked-based learning</li> <li>b. Communicative language teaching</li> <li>c. Interactive method</li> <li>d. Peer-work</li> <li>e. Group work</li> <li>f. Student-centered learning</li> </ul>
<p>2. When students have a problem understanding certain vocabulary, phrase or sentence, what do you do to help them understand?</p>	<p>70% of Instructors said that they</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ask the students to guess meanings from context</li> <li>b. Use synonyms or antonyms</li> <li>c. Use examples, images, symbols or gestures</li> <li>d. Allow students use their dictionary</li> </ul> <p>30% stated that they do direct translation from the students' native (indigenous) language to the target language (English Language)</p>
<p>3. If students have a challenge comprehending or keeping pace with your accent, what do you do to assist?</p>	<p>Many of the respondents said that they do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Repeat words, phrases or sentences</li> <li>b. Speak slowly</li> <li>c. Use gestures</li> <li>d. Paraphrase</li> <li>e. Get other students involved to help their mates</li> <li>f. Ask questions to check comprehension</li> </ul>
<p>4. Not every student enjoys learning a foreign language. How do you get</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 60% of respondents said they use pair work, group work, games, problem-solution exercises to get</li> </ul>

<p>such students interested in the target language?</p>	<p>students interested in the target language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. 20% said they give positive and supportive feedback, try to connect target language (English) to their interests, show real-life value, ask them what they like about the target language so as to focus on that.</li> <li>c. Another 20% stated that the students have the sole responsibility of motivating themselves to learn the target language.</li> </ul>
<p>5. When students don't seem to remember the meaning of words, phrases or sentences that they have been taught, what do you do to help them remember?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 70% of Instructors quipped that they fall back on games and activities to recycle vocabulary, use gestures, pictures, synonyms, antonyms and examples.</li> <li>b. 20% said they allow the students to use the dictionary to help recall meanings of words.</li> <li>c. 10% stated that they allow the students to struggle on their own to figure out the meanings of words.</li> </ul>

### Discussion

The survey results above clearly indicate that leveraging Discourse Analysis in student engagement during foreign language teaching facilitates better understanding.

Broadly speaking, Discourse Analysis is a part of Language Study that deals with how language users make sense of what they read in texts, understand what speakers mean irrespective of what they say, recognize connected speech and successfully take part in conversations. Discourse Analysis thrives on cohesion and coherence. Cohesion simply refers to the ties and connections which exist within texts or utterances while coherence is the sense made of what is read or heard. So, while cohesion is text or utterance oriented,

coherence is people oriented (that is, how a reader or listener understands/interprets a text or an utterance).

Discourse Analysis plays a critical role in enhancing communication skills by enabling learners to understand the nuances of language use. By probing how context shapes meaning, students are helped to develop the ability to meaningfully engage in dialogues and interpret various forms of communication. Given the context of this study, we shall primarily be focusing on **Multimodal Discourse Analysis**.

**Multimodal Discourse Analysis** as an approach to Discourse, focuses on how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication as opposed to just language. In this study, we shall closely examine aspects of Multimodal Discourse Analysis that enhance effective foreign language teaching and learning.

- a. **Demonstration:** This is a teaching method where the Teacher shows students how to perform a specific task. It is also a hands-on approach where students learn by observing and imitating the teacher. In foreign language teaching, this method is effective while taking the students in reading and pronunciation sessions. Here, the teacher articulates words from a text, or a phonetics table and students repeat after the teacher. Demonstrations can also be used to explain phrases and sentences. For example, in trying to explain the phrase: “My name is”, the Teacher can demonstrate by introducing himself or someone else. The teacher can also help students decipher the meaning of words using demonstration. As an example, the Teacher can literally demonstrate words such as: “jump”, “escalate”, “manipulate”, “categorize” “addition”, “subtraction” etc. This form of teaching is relatable, practical, engaging, fun and improves retention as students are more likely to remember what they saw and experienced.
- b. **Gestures:** These add a visual and kinesthetic element to learning, making complex concepts more engaging and memorable. Gestures can also be used to explain the meanings of simple words such as: “go”, “come”, “eat”, “drive”, “drink”, “sleep” etc. They can be used to explain idiomatic expressions such as: “the man kicked the bucket”, “he threw in the towel”, “he kissed the dust”, “she gave him a cold shoulder”, “the trip cost an arm and a leg” etc. Gestures enhance improved comprehension, increased retention and improve student engagement.

- c. **Storytelling:** This injects life into language lessons and aids understanding of concepts. This approach captivates learners and makes lessons more relatable and memorable. Storytelling can be used to explain such concepts as: “an unpleasant experience”, “a memorable day”, “my happiest day”, “success”, “failure”, “disappointment”, “embarrassment” etc. It can as well be extensively used to effectively teach creative writing.
- d. **Dramatization:** Dramatization can make language learning more engaging, interactive, and memorable. Role-plays, skits, or short scenes can be used to get students to practice their language skills in a fun and dynamic fashion. When a Teacher employs dramatization as a teaching tool, students are helped to improve their speaking, reading and listening skills. It also builds students’ confidence in using the target language. Dramatization creates cultural awareness as students are introduced to cultural nuances and customs.
- e. **Examples and Parallels:** Examples and parallels can help foreign language learners understand complex concepts, vocabulary, and grammar by associating familiar ideas or situations. To bring a concept or idea home or decode a vocabulary, the Teacher uses examples of situations or circumstances the students are familiar with and which relates it to the concept or vocabulary. For instance, the students may struggle to understand the following sentence: “*There is a penalty for flouting stipulated rules and regulations*”. They may not understand what “penalty” and “flouting” mean. The Teacher might use a simple example or analogy that the students already know to explain those words. The Teacher could remind them of one of the exam rules that states that students must not cheat and any student caught cheating (*flouting or disobeying the rule*) will be indefinitely suspended from the school (*penalty or punishment*). That way, students are able to understand the given sentence: “There is a penalty for flouting stipulated rules and regulations”.
- f. **Illustrations:** Illustrations appeal to visual learners and they can help learners visualize and comprehend complex concepts, vocabulary and grammar. The Teacher uses illustrations to appeal to the students’ sense of imagination to get them to understand given contexts. Using this approach, the Teacher leverages pictures and images to illustrate vocabulary, grammar and cultural concepts. For instance, in trying to make the students understand the concept of “restaurant & dishes”, the Teacher uses images and pictures to drive home the point. The Teacher can also use

diagrams and infographics to help foreign language learners visualize complex information like grammar rules or language structures. And then videos and animations are dynamic illustrations that can engage learners and stimulate interactive learning.

- g.* **Repetition of words for emphasis:** Still leveraging multimodal discourse analysis, the foreign language Teacher can repeat words for emphasis. These words can be new words or words difficult to pronounce. They can also be vocabulary that is sparingly used or a vocabulary that has graduated meanings.
- h.* **Slow Manner of Articulation:** Teachers who are native speakers of the language they teach have the natural propensity to speak fast even while teaching. Most times, they do this unconsciously. When this happens, learners struggle with understanding the Teacher as the Teacher's pace of speaking is too fast for comprehension at the learners' level. It therefore behooves the Teacher to make a conscious effort to speak slowly, pausing briefly between words, so that the students can understand a greater part of what is being said. Understanding is further enhanced when the Teacher uses simple grammar and short sentences.
- i.* **Lesson recap and reflection:** Lesson recap basically means summarizing the main ideas, concepts and takeaways from the lesson. It helps students reinforce their understanding and retain information. It provides closure by bringing the lesson to a close and setting the stage for future learning. Effective lesson recap will require more Student Talking Time (STT) than Teacher Talking Time (TTT). It could take the form of a Q & A session, where the Teacher asks questions on a just-concluded lesson and students will provide the answers. The quality of their answers will show how much of the lesson they understood. This sort of summative assessment is effective in foreign language teaching. On the other hand, lesson reflection means analyzing the lesson, reflecting on what worked well, what did not and what could be improved. Lesson reflection helps the foreign language Teacher recognize the effectiveness of teaching methods used. The Teacher uses the insights from reflection to adjust teaching strategies and improve student learning.
- j.* **Humor:** Humor in the classroom is a powerful pedagogical tool that can enhance learning, build positive Teacher-Student relationships. In foreign language teaching, when humor is correctly used, it can help ignite the students' interests and motivate them to show better affinity for the target language. Humor reduces stress and

anxiety. It also increases engagement as students feel positive and comfortable in a safe environment. Usually, it is the Teacher that consciously initiates the humor, linking it to a particular context of a particular lesson. That way, the learning from that lesson sticks as students can easily relate it to the humor. Humor also presents the Teacher as approachable and connected. It shows that the Teacher is not aloof and distant. With this kind of learning ambience, students feel confident to experiment with the risk of learning a foreign language. Humor enhances retention and gives room for improved rapport.

- k.* **Conviviality:** In education, Conviviality refers to a pedagogical method that fosters autonomous, creative and collaborative learning as opposed to “top-to-down” instruction. It prioritizes personal freedom, interpersonal relationships and community over institutional efficiency. Emphasis is on the joy of shared learning instead of skills acquisition. Here, the Educator, Teacher or Instructor champions the cause by creating an atmosphere of camaraderie where close touch and friendliness reign. The instructor establishes an overall warm relationship with the class and also further narrows down to a one-on-one relationship with the students. He or she goes personal by identifying the students by name. This demeanor positions students to be favorably disposed to learning the target foreign language as they feel a sense of belonging and commitment.

### **Conclusion:**

This study adds to the growing body of research on how Discourse Analysis enhances effective foreign language teaching to non-native speakers. Our findings suggest that Teachers can leverage **Multimodal Discourse Analysis** to effectively teach a foreign language to non-native speakers. This article has been designed to expose fresh and experienced foreign language Teachers to the various tested and proven Multimodal Discourse Analysis teaching approaches that can facilitate meaningful and successful language learning engagement with the objective of turning out well-taught and well-groomed language students who are poised to challenge the world with their new foreign language skills.

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