

THE ROLE OF MULTISENSORY APPROACHES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

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Multisensory approaches in language learning engage multiple senses—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile—to enhance learners’ ability to acquire, retain, and use a second language. This paper explores the effectiveness of multisensory techniques in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Through a combination of classroom observations and student feedback, the study demonstrates that multisensory strategies promote deeper understanding, greater motivation, and improved retention. The results support the integration of multisensory learning into modern language pedagogy for learners with diverse cognitive styles and needs..

Traditional language instruction has often relied on visual (textbook) and auditory (lecture) input. However, current educational research emphasizes that learning becomes more effective when multiple sensory modalities are engaged simultaneously. The multisensory approach is rooted in the idea that learners absorb information better when it is presented using various sensory pathways—seeing, hearing, touching, and moving.

Originally popularized in special education, multisensory strategies are now recognized as powerful tools for all types of learners, especially in language education. By involving sight (e.g., visual aids), sound (e.g., songs or dialogues), touch (e.g., flashcards, tactile activities), and movement (e.g., Total Physical Response), educators can support diverse learning styles, address learning difficulties, and increase engagement and memory retention.

This study investigates how multisensory techniques affect student participation, motivation, and language acquisition in EFL classrooms, particularly in mixed-ability groups.

The study was conducted over 6 weeks in three different EFL classrooms (Grades 5–8) at a secondary school in Uzbekistan. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, including:

- Classroom observations of teachers using multisensory activities.
- Pre- and post-tests to assess vocabulary and grammar acquisition.
- Student surveys and feedback forms to gather perceptions about the learning experience.

Multisensory techniques used during the observation included:

- Visual: flashcards, posters, color-coded grammar charts
- Auditory: chants, songs, recordings, teacher modeling
- Kinesthetic/Tactile: role-plays, object-based vocabulary games, writing in sand trays

Students were grouped into two cohorts: one using traditional instruction and one using multisensory methods.

The analysis revealed several key findings:

Measure	Traditional Group	Multisensory Group
Average vocabulary test score	72%	89%
Grammar retention after 2 weeks	61%	83%
Reported motivation (1–5 scale)	3.2	4.6
Active participation in class	Moderate	High

- Students in the multisensory group outperformed the control group in both vocabulary and grammar acquisition.

- Feedback from students highlighted that learning through actions, colors, and music made lessons more memorable and fun.

- Teachers noted higher engagement, particularly among students who previously struggled with traditional methods.

The results strongly support the idea that multisensory approaches can enhance language learning outcomes, particularly in inclusive or diverse classrooms. The use of visual and

kinesthetic elements helped reinforce vocabulary through association, while auditory input improved pronunciation and listening comprehension.

Importantly, multisensory strategies align with multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983), catering to students who may be visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, or musical learners. This inclusive strategy reduces barriers for learners with dyslexia, ADHD, or low motivation, offering more personalized and accessible instruction.

Moreover, multisensory learning increases emotional involvement, which is known to aid long-term memory. When learners sing, act, move, and touch while learning, they associate the language with experience, not just abstract grammar rules.

However, the implementation of multisensory methods requires adequate teacher training, classroom resources, and time management. Teachers must also balance sensory-rich activities with cognitive demands to avoid overstimulation.

In digital learning environments, multisensory strategies can be adapted through interactive apps, virtual reality (VR), and video-based instruction, which combine input channels in creative ways.

Multisensory approaches in language teaching offer substantial benefits, especially for learners who need more engaging and differentiated instruction. By combining visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile elements, educators can enhance language retention, increase student motivation, and create inclusive classrooms that accommodate various learning preferences.

To maximize effectiveness, educators should integrate multisensory strategies within a broader communicative framework and ensure that each sensory activity aligns with clear linguistic goals. In doing so, the multisensory method can serve as a powerful complement to modern language pedagogy.

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