

## THE USE OF A DIGITAL MULTIMODAL TEXTBOOK TO FOSTER STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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### ABSTRACTS

This research aimed to determine students' English language proficiency after conducting an experiment. A method that was implemented was the use of a digital multimodal textbook application called Book Creator. This method focused on teaching students the English language using a digital textbook that promoted multimodality. In the test book, some modes were applied (teacher's voice recorded, videos from the internet, and pictures). This research was a pre-experimental method that used one group sample. The research data was collected to measure the effectiveness of the method using pre-and post-test as the research instrument. From the data, it was found that the use of a digital multimodal textbook gave improvement to most of the student's English language proficiency. However, a few students only experienced a little improvement. The data shows that there was a significant difference in students' scores between the pre-and post-test. The mean score in the pre-test was 47.81 with the minimum score being 26 before the treatment. Meanwhile, after the application of the digital multimodal textbook, the mean score of the post-test encountered improvement to 65.50 and the minimum score was 40. From the data, it was revealed that even though most of the students gained a better understanding after the treatment. However, a few students still had difficulty upgrading their English language proficiency.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the Indonesian context, learning English is still a scary specter. It is due to the fact that English is not used in daily life and is only learned as a subject at school (Suryanto, 2014) resulting in being afraid of making mistakes (Heriansyah, 2012). It is undeniable that the chance to use the English language is limited at school only which means students do not have enough time to practice the English language. Therefore, the students encounter a difficult time getting used to using this target language. Another reason why English is difficult is Bahasa Indonesia has totally different phonology and phonetic (Kaharuddin & Ahmad, 2018). Therefore, students have trouble pronouncing the English words which lead to demotivation to learn the target language.

Moreover, the characteristics of Indonesian learners become one of the reasons why it is hard to achieve learning objectives. In Indonesia, most schools adopt teacher-centered learning which means the teachers are the source of information. Even though the national curriculum has been changed several times and adopted student-centered learning, the reality

said that students cannot follow the curriculum and always consider the teachers as the center of learning. According to Exley (2005), Indonesian students have the characteristics of being culturally passive, self-conscious, and unable to express their idea in the classroom context. They find it difficult to be active in the class activities even though the teacher asks them to take part. A question then arises, whether these characteristics apply only in learning English or in all subjects as culturally embedded characteristics (Suryanto, 2014).

In this era, technology has expropriated many parts of human life including many aspects of education sectors. Face-to-face learning has been replaced by online learning due to the pandemic strike for more than 2 years. Today, the era of the new normal is being promoted vigorously meaning that the chance to re-switch the learning method amid the pandemic can happen at any time. However, the technology trail will remain the same. Many applications that benefit from distance learning have been adopted and will still be used even though offline learning will be enforced due to the less effectiveness of online learning to students' learning achievement (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Basar et al., 2021). Therefore, the need to find a good way to teach English to inactive students is essential for English teachers. One of the best ways is by using digital multimodal text. The use of multimodal learning is advanced yet interesting for young generation (Magnusson & Godhe, 2019), especially it is related to the technology and the internet. Multimodal is defined as the integration of some semiotic modes between in-text linguistics and modes such as visuals, gestures, spatial and audio and becomes a way of communication (Ikasari et al., 2019; Zamzamy, 2021) even though there is a possibility where one mode dominates others (Ikasari et al., 2019). This means that the application of multimodality refers to the unification of some modes which are used to create a learning material. From the material, students are able to enjoy learning using text that is integrated with pictures, sounds, or videos.

It is undeniable that multimodality has become a choice to learn a new language in diverse classrooms. Practically, the era of digital gives a massive contribution to the development of modality as a new method to learn a foreign language (Cowan & Kress, 2017; Ezeh, 2021) as well as the way to effectively engage student to learn (Ilmi et al., 2020). Moreover, the presence of digital environment simplifies the teachers to combine different modes ((Adami, 2015) such as videos and audio (Susanti et al., 2022). Therefore, This technology offers new perspectives on how to use textbooks in learning. As Adami (2016: 452) contended that:

“The advent of digital technologies has contributed to changes in the perception of what constitutes data in many text-based disciplines. Digital technologies provide analysts with multimodal means of recording, coding and transcribing data, such as videos and video annotation systems. When analysing a video-recorded rather than a tape-recorded face-to-face interaction, the multimodal character of the communicative event becomes more immediately manifest and what could be regarded as context or contextual information in earlier tape-recordings (something that the researcher could neither see nor handle from tape-recorded data) is now visible as meanings expressed by participants through gestures, movement, and face expressions, or through 3D objects.”

One of the advanced digital technologies that support multimodal learning is the Book Creator Application. This application allows teachers to create and develop their learning material in interesting ways. In creating the material using this application, the teachers can integrate texts, pictures, sounds, and videos that can be inserted into the book. Furthermore, students can access the material from anywhere and anytime as long as they have an internet connection. Additionally, this book is suitable to learn English grammar as the contents are made interesting. According to Gajek (2019), students can understand learning material in different ways and one of the best ways is to use not only alphanumeric but also along with sounds and images which can engage students' participation in the teaching and learning process.

As foreign language learners come from different language backgrounds and have varying language proficiencies, using tools that give the students diverse opportunities to express meaning in ways that support language acquisition is important. The tools to support learning a new language are vary and some of them are multimodal applications such as Storybird, Book Creator, and Storyjumper (Ezeh, 2021). In addition, she claimed that applications have multimodal components that can be exploited in the classrooms to maximize students' potential in an environment where all modes of meaning-making are valued and given visibility. Moreover, Kallinikou & Nicolaidou (2019) opine that the process of storytelling supports increased meaningful language production necessary for literacy development. Therefore, many advantages can be gained by the foreign language learners when implementing these applications which support storytelling and affordances of the applications including multimodal writing, collaborative writing, feedback, and authentic language use (Ezeh, 2021). These reasons are important for the development of a new language especially, for a foreign language.

Many scholars in education have conducted research on digital multimodality. Multimodality is not only limited to gestures, audios, and spatial dimensions of communication, but also computer-mediated communication (Heberle, 2010). A study on multimodality comes Ajayi (2012). He wanted to find out about the use of multimodal textbooks to enhance students' English language learning. This study had two participants and both participants were classified as effective teachers. Research data was collected using class observation, interviews, field notes, and text analysis. The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers utilized multimodality resources from two textbooks to improve students' English proficiency. The results showed that the teachers underwent difficulties to promote the use of multimodality which is integrated with the text.

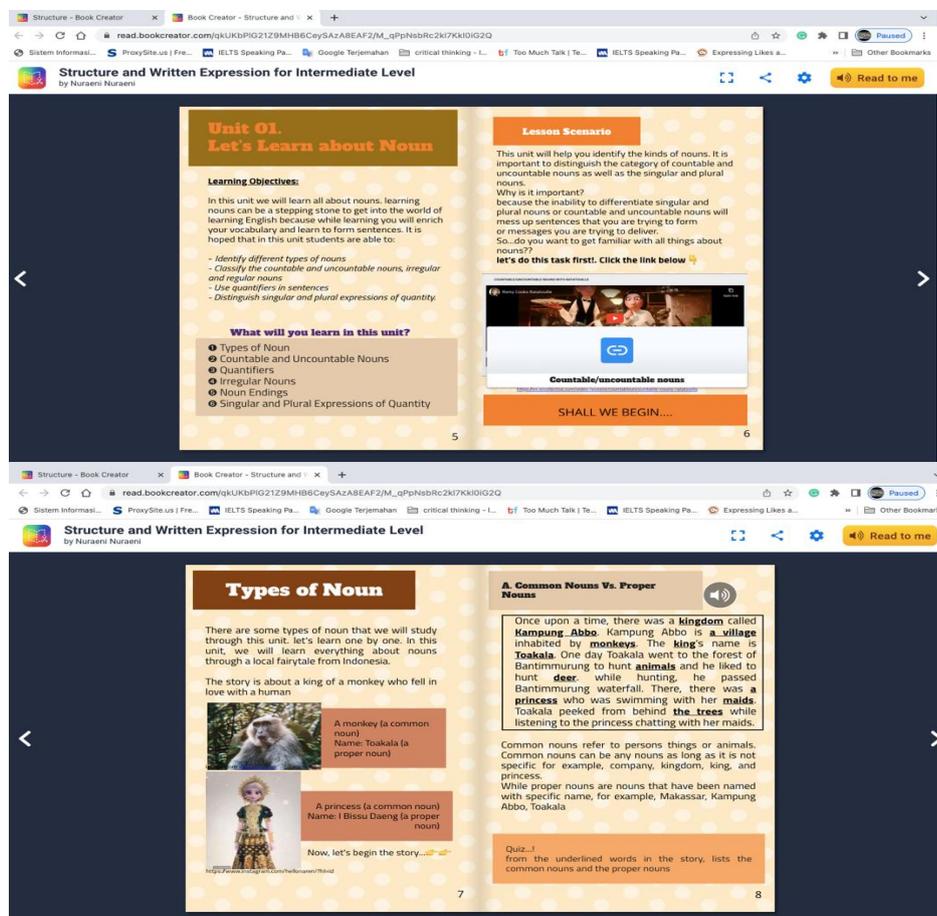
Another multimodal research in foreign language comes from Martínez Lirola (2020). This research aimed to show the essentiality of multimodal material in higher education level. During the implementation of the research procedure, the multimodal materials were selected by determining kinds of the modes that promote language acquisition which are necessary for the labor market. To gather the research data, the researcher conducted a survey to acknowledge the students' view on the use of multimodality in teaching. The result showed that utilizing some modes in teaching promoted learning acquisition in many different social circumstances.

Meanwhile, Gajek (2019) promotes multimodality in his study by analyzing multimodality contents from pre-service teachers and students. The pre-service language teachers made teaching contents of video clips such as introducing new language, language usage, improving practice, performance documentation, and learning assessment. While the students modified a video material by adding subtitles, intertitles, and narrative re-voicing of a story. The result of the study found that the activities conducted by both the teachers and the students were able to enhance their performances in language learning.

Lastly, another research on multimodality is conducted by Ganapathy & Seetharam (2016). This study was about using the multimodal approach for ESL learners. It utilized a multimodal framework to restructure the teaching and learning of ESL learners. The aim of the research was to investigate the effect of the multimodal approach and to examine students' perspectives on this matter using the multiliteracy theory. To gather participants' data, the researchers used focus group interviews with 15 students. the results affirmed that there was a need to rebuild the teaching and learning of ESL with a focus on multimodal pedagogical practices as it promoted positive learning outcomes among students as well as promoting autonomous learning, improving motivation, and facilitating various learning styles.

From previous studies, it is shown that multimodality plays an important role in teaching a foreign language. The integration between text and various modes can boost students' curiosity to learn the target language. Most of the studies claim that using multimodalities such as videos and pictures can engage the student to learn. Moreover, the use of digital multimedia such as social media can elevate students' motivation as they learn from something that they are familiar with.

However, there is still a need for the teachers to create the multimodal materials in order to smooth the teaching and learning process resulting the better understanding from the students. One of the studies which come from Ajayi (2012) shows that teachers experienced difficulty performing using the multimodality approach. Besides, none of the studies used a learning application that can combine some modes such as pictures, videos, and voice. In this study, the researchers used an application called Book Creator. This application allows teachers to create a digital textbook. The Book Creator has features that can promote multimodality such as adding voice, videos, and pictures to the textbook. In addition, the application provides a digital reader of native English voice that can be used by students who want to hear the correct pronunciation of the words. In other words, this digital multimodal textbook application will be able to support students who learn English as a foreign language. Moreover, the digital textbook which are combined with some modes can be an attractive way to learn English (Bikowski & Casal, 2018). See picture 1.



Picture 1. Example of the Content in the Book Creator

([https://read.bookcreator.com/qkUKbPIG2I29MHB6CeySAzA8EAF2/M\\_qPpNsbRc2kI7KkI0iG2Q](https://read.bookcreator.com/qkUKbPIG2I29MHB6CeySAzA8EAF2/M_qPpNsbRc2kI7KkI0iG2Q))

In this research, the researchers used a digital multimodal textbook called Book Creator Application to boost students' understanding of English grammar. They learned how to

acknowledge kinds of English grammar using a multimodal textbook. This research was designed to assist the foreign language learners to learn English grammar in an interesting way. Using sounds, pictures and videos are believed to be able to engage the students to learn in a fun way.

From the explanation of the background problem, the research was conducted to assist students in order to improve students' language proficiency, particularly in grammar by the use of a digital multimodal textbook. This research aimed to answer the question whether the use of digital multimodal textbook fostered students' language proficiency.

Before describing the data, it is important to emphasize the hypothesis of the research as follows:

H0: There was no significant difference in students' English language proficiency after the implementation of a digital multimedia textbook that promoted multimodality

Ha: There was a significant difference in students' English language proficiency after the implementation of a digital multimedia textbook that promoted multimodality.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

The research design applied in this study was a quantitative approach. It is about quantifying with numbers and analyzing variables to obtain research results (Apuke, 2017). According to Creswell and Creswell (2017: 41),

“Quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedure. The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion. Like qualitative researchers, those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumption about testing theory deductively, building in protection against bias, controlling for alternative or counterfactual explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings”

This implies that conducting research using a quantitative approach should be done in a systematic way. The research is meant to test theories to determine the variables' relationship. In addition, this kind of research utilizes facts to be investigated, processes the results of the research to confirm the previous experiments, finds solutions for the research problems, and promotes existing theories (Apuke, 2017).

In this study, the researchers applied a pre-experimental method using one group's pre-test and post-test design. The pre-experimental design does not involve another group as a comparison (Rogers & Révész, 2020). This research involved one group only. This group received treatment by using multimodal approach. The students were taught materials from an application called Book Creator. This application promotes multimodality to attract students to learn the materials. The design of this research can be seen in table 1.

Table 1  
The Pattern of One Group Pre-Test and Post-Test Design

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
01	X	02

(Jacob et al., 2010)

Explanation of the table:

01: students conduct the pre-test before the research treatment

X : students obtain the treatment using multimodality

02: students conduct the post-test after the research treatment

## Population and sample

Before choosing research samples or participants, the researchers need to determine the research population. A population refers to a group of items, units, or subjects that are under the reference of study (Bhatt, 2020). A population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic (Creswell, 2009). The population of this research was students of the English Education Department of Universitas Muslim Maros in the academic year 2022/2023. All students were English language learners. The total population was 77 students.

The sample is part of a population. A good sample should be a representation of the population. A sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researchers plan to study for generalizing the target population (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the samples were 16 students from semester II in the academic year 2022/2023.

## Research instrument

To get better data, the researchers need to prepare a data instrument. A research instrument is a tool for collecting data from participants. In this research, the researchers used a pre-test and post-test as the instrument in the form of a test. The test contains English grammar questions. The pre-test was conducted before a treatment was given while the post-test was carried out after the treatment. The pre-test was purposed to acknowledge students' language proficiency. After conducting the treatment using multimodality, the students were given a post-test with the same test as the pre-test. This aimed to acknowledge whether the use of multimodality boosted the students' language proficiency.

## Technique of data analysis

This research used a quantitative method in analyzing the data. The data was analyzed using SPSS Program Ver.28. The collected data from the pre-test and the post-test were scored using the following scoring classification.

Table 2  
The Scoring Classification

No	Classification	Score
1	Excellent	91-100
2	Good	75-90
3	Fair	61-74
4	Less	41-60
5	Poor	0-40

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

The research that had been conducted aimed to determine whether the use of multimedia in the form of an online textbook improved students' English language proficiency. In this research, the researchers used pre-test and post-test to collect the research data. These tests were conducted as the instrument of the data collection. The tests had the same questions consisting of 18 Questions.

After collecting the research data from the pre-test and the post-test, the data was then analyzed using descriptive analysis from SPSS. The findings of the research will elaborate as follows:

### The Pre-test and the post-test in the Experimental Class

Before carrying out a treatment in the experimental class using a digital textbook, the researchers gave a pre-test to the research samples. This test was used to find out students' initial skills before performing the experiment. After conducting an experiment using a digital textbook that supports multimodal, students were given a post-test. This test was used to determine whether students had a different score from the pre-test. If the post-test score was higher, it means students' English language proficiency improved. The result of this test is presented in table 3.

Table 3  
The Pre-Test and Post-Test Frequency in the Experimental Class

No	Score	Classification	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Students Frequency	Percentage	Students Frequency	Percentage
1	0-40	Poor	4	25%	1	6,25%
2	41-60	less	10	62,5%	5	31,25%
3	61-74	Fair	1	6,25%	7	43,75%
4	75-90	Good	1	6,25%	3	18,75%
5	91-100	Excellent	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>			<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

It is clearly seen from table 3 that in the pre-test, the students' ability in English language proficiency was very low. Most students did not answer all the questions correctly. Even though there was one student who had a good grade and was classified as 'good', most students got scores below 60. From the data, as many as 10 students scored in the range of 40-60 which were classified as 'less', and four students were in the 'poor' classification.

In order to be considered to have good English proficiency skills, students must at least be at a fair classification. Unfortunately, only two students were categorized in this level. As mentioned previously, one student got a very high score and was categorized as the 'good' classification and one other student was in the 'Fair' classification. Alas, no students were classified as the 'excellent' classification.

Meanwhile, in the post-test, the data shows that there was a significant difference between the score of the pre-test dan the post-test. After being given the treatment using a digital multimodal textbook during the research experiment, students showed better performance. It can be seen from the result of the post-test that only 1 student was in the 'poor' classification. In the pre-test, it was found that 10 students were in the 'less' classification. However, after studying in the class experiment using a digital multimodal textbook, only 5 students remaining in this category.

Moreover, students who were in the 'fair' classification increased significantly with 7 students. In addition, 3 students were classified as 'good'. Unfortunately, still none of the students reached the 'excellent' classification. Yet, the improvement in both classifications showed that the used method succeed to assist the student to enhance their English language proficiency. To see a clearer picture of students' improvement below is the bar chart of the students' classification level both in the pre-test and the post-test.

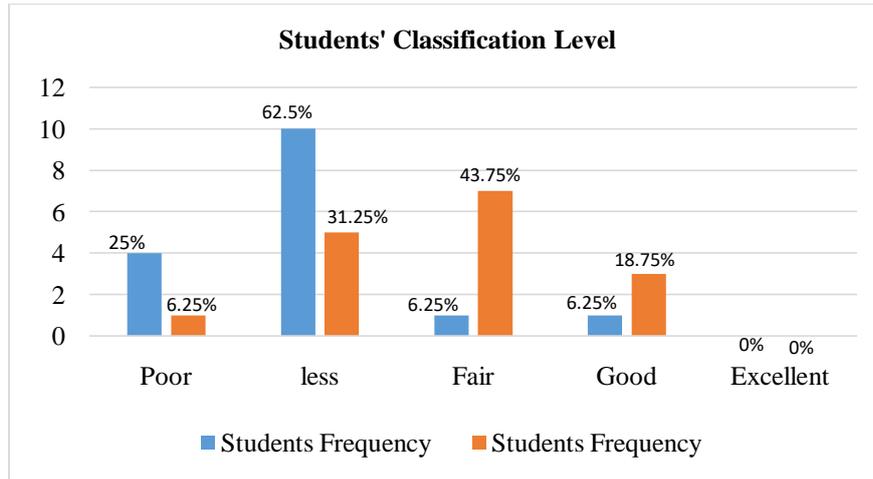


Figure 1. Bar Chart of Students' Frequency in the Pre-test and the Post-test

Figure 1 gives information on the students' frequency in the pre-test and the post-test using a digital multimodal textbook. There are five classifications for the students' scores (poor, less, fair, good, and excellent). It is clearly seen that overall, most students had difficulty answering the test in the pre-test. However, after the application of a digital multimodal textbook, the students showed better scores in the post-test. Therefore, it can be said that the use of a digital multimodal textbook succeeded to assist the students to improve their English language proficiency.

From the bar chart, it can be assumed that students in the classification of 'poor and less' were categorized as having low ability in English language proficiency. From the data, 25% of the students were in the 'poor' classification and 65.5% were in the 'less' classification before the research experiment took a place. Fortunately, after carrying out the experiment, students with low ability decreased significantly. The proportion of the 'poor' classification dropped by quadruple to only 6.25% and the 'less' classification decreased by double to 31.25%.

Meanwhile, it is believed that the classifications of fair, good, and excellent are for those who had better and or good at English language proficiency. From the data in the pre-test, only 6.25% of the students were in the 'fair' classification and the same friction was seen for the 'good' classification. However, after undergoing the experiment, many students showed better scores. The data presents information that 43.75% of the students performed better in the post-test and were classified as 'fair. It means that there was a significant improvement in this classification. Furthermore, the same case happened in the classification of 'good' even though the improvement was not significantly high with around 18.75% of the students. In the meantime, the highest classification was empty. Unfortunately, none of the students was able to reach the 'excellent' classification.

**The students' Mean score between the pre-test and the post-test**

Table 4  
The Students' Mean Score Between the Pre-Test and The Post-Test

	Students' Mean score				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	16	26.00	85.00	47.8125	14.61150
Post-test	16	40.00	85.00	65.5000	13.54991
Valid N (listwise)	16				

In order to acknowledge whether the use of a multimodal digital textbook improved students' English language proficiency, students' mean score of both tests needed to be analyzed. The mean score comes from the average score of the given number. From the data, it shows that the students' mean score in the pre-test was 47.81 with a standard deviation of 14.61. Meanwhile, in the post-test, the students' mean score arose to 65,50 with a standard deviation of 13,54. From this data, it can be said that there was an increase on students' language proficiency after the implementation of the digital textbook.

To acknowledge which hypothesis was accepted, the researchers analyzed the data using paired sample t-test.

Table 5  
Paired Sample T-Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Lower	Upper									
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-17.687	12.010	3.002	-24.087	-11.288	-5.891	15	<.001	<.001

The paired sample t-test was used to acknowledge whether there was a significant difference between students' scores in the pre-and post-test. This analysis was used to answer the researcher's hypothesis testing. Based on the result of paired sample t-test analysis, it was obtained that the t-value was - 5.891 and the sig value (two-sided) is <.001. It means H<sub>0</sub> was rejected and H<sub>a</sub> is accepted. It can be said that there was a significant difference in students' scores before and after the treatment. Therefore, the use of a digital multimodal textbook that promoted multimodality to improve students' English language proficiency showed significant improvement.

## Discussion

In today's new normal era, technology has been part of education world. many educational applications promote multimodality. Multimodal refers to the combination of two or more modes that produce meaning (Ilmi et al., 2020). Meanwhile, digital multimodal is the combination of modes which do not come from scratches but are taken from online sources in the form of still and moving pictures, sound, and music (Adami, 2015). In term of digital multimodal textbook, some modes of the book are created from availability of online sources that can be generated through the forwarding, sharing, assemblage, and editing of previously existing texts (Adami, 2015:186).

This research focused on the use of a multimodal digital textbook in order to foster students' language proficiency. After carrying out 10 meetings for the application of the digital textbook, It is discovered that students' language proficiency experienced improving which was proven from the result of the score's comparison between the pre-test and the post-test of the students. During the application of the digital textbook, the students were active in learning English structure. It is due to the fact that the digital textbook is designed in attractive and interactive ways and the combination of some modes are attached such as video clips, colored pictures, and voice recording that triggered their motivation to learn. According to Bikowski & Casal (2018) in their study, the application of a customized interactive digital textbook elevates students' engagement during the learning process. Similarly, Susanti et al. (2022) contend that the combination of some modes such as pictures and colors can assist students to learn. As a result, students' motivation increases as well as the improvement of

their learning (Martínez Lirola, 2020). Therefore, The result of this research supports the idea that multimodality plays an important role in language teaching (Magnusson & Godhe, 2019; Miladiyah, 2018).

Before the implementation of the digital textbook, the students mostly had low scores. The majority of the students were categorized as 'less'. However, After the implementation of the digital multimodal textbook, nearly all students showed improvement. From the result, it shows that the application of the digital textbook gave a positive effect and the students' English language proficiency experienced improvement. This statement is supported by the mean score of students' post-test which is higher than the pre-test. This result is in line with a study conducted by Gajek (2019) who finds that the use of multimodal textbooks can give positive vibes in class interaction during the teaching and learning process. This positiveness is able to improve the performance of not only the students but also the teacher. Moreover, Ganapathy & Seetharam's study (2016) have a similar result. They claim that the use of a digital multimodal textbook promotes positive learning achievement and improves the students' motivation to learn.

However, not all students have the same motivation for learning. Ajay (2012) claims in his study that teachers experienced difficulty to teach students using multimodality. In addition, Bikowski & Casal (2018) in their research finds that even almost all students were engaged in using digital multimodal textbook, one student felt reversely and was not motivated by the digital book. From those findings, similar result was found in this study. During the implementation of the digital textbook with multimodality content, some students were not engaged and found it difficult to follow the teacher's method of using multimodality. The combinations of some modes did not attract their attention and the teacher experienced difficulty teaching some students using this method resulting inactive behavior during the learning process. In short, even though many researchers believe that multimodality is gaining more interest in this new normal era, it still faces challenges in its implementation (Zamzamy, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

This research is a quantitative study using one group's pre-test and post-test design using the pre-experimental method. The method that was applied in the treatment was a digital multimodal textbook from the Book Creator application. This method utilized some modes such as pictures, videos, text, and recording in a textbook. The result shows that before the treatment using a digital multimodal textbook, most students were in the 'less' classification. Even some students were in the "poor" classification. This means that most students' English language proficiency was very low. After the implementation of the digital multimodal textbook using the Book Creator application, most students showed significant improvement. The students were mostly in the 'fair' classification. Students who were in the 'poor and less' classification decreased significantly. Moreover, some students elevated their skills and were in the 'good' classification. This result can be interpreted that even though few students were still in the 'poor and less' classification, most students underwent development in their language proficiency. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement before and after the implementation of a digital multimodal textbook in students' English language proficiency.

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