



Article

Language Materiality and Transmodal Production in EFL Classroom: The Case of Dayaknese Students

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A B S T R A C T

Globalization has ushered English language teaching (ELT) to a radical shift which results in the incorporation of post-humanist paradigm in ELT. Ironically, however, this paradigm has not been thoroughly considered in ELT in periphery contexts where sociocultural-semiotic symbols as language materiality abound. In this article we consider language materiality as part of cultural materiality and social life which highlights transmodal elements a key concept in parallel localization within communities. The present study examines how the indigenous Dayak community in Kalimantan, Indonesia, utilizes materiality and transmodal production in EFL classrooms to facilitate knowledge construction through interactions with diverse objects, symbols, and resources. An instant ethnography was employed to capture transmodal moments, such as from writing to speaking, video to text, or speech to action, which result in dynamic transformations and expansions of meaning in the multimodal discourses classroom to students who have not previously learned English in their primary school. Multimodal Conversation Analysis (MCA) was used to analyze the data, which revealed that materiality is a transmodal production that encourages students to create meaning via their own lenses. As the students immersed themselves in the phase-by-phase engagement with semiotic symbols related to their English classes, the result shows that they improved their communication skills, comprehension, and access to knowledge. Based on their understanding of English, the knowledge they gain provides them with the opportunities to think critically. Furthermore, transmodal through materials can be applied as sources for students to make meaning.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization where voices from various English language teaching contexts find their resonances, a shift from a focus on language components per se to an emphasis on practical use and from cognitive understanding to social interaction has established ELT fields (Canagarajah, 2014). Social interaction highlights the significance of cultural context in English language instruction that is demonstrated by Suharni et al., (2024) in this journal that one of Language and culture are linked since they

reflect the values, views, and background of their speakers, making it the primary responsibility of EFL teachers to promote intercultural competency and understanding. This shift in focus has made it possible for students to learn about social situations and gain the ability to interpret local semiotic resources as a means of learning. Despite the speed at which technology is developing, there are many resources that offer affordances for learning, such as language materiality, especially in peripheral contexts that allow students to gain knowledge through transmodal production.

Language materiality in this writing is used to encompass the actions individuals undertake with and through language across various contexts such as work, play, meaning-making, and value creation (Cavanaugh & Shankar, 2017). This concept is marked by a focus on practices and processes involving performative and embodied interactions between human and non-human participants. One of the key aspects of language materiality is transmodal production, which explores how language comprises a variety of semiotic resources that are contextually, socially, and attitudinally confined. It allows different modalities influencing one another's meanings and expressions (Nordvall et al., 2016). When a sign is used, its use is believed to imply and presuppose certain things such as things-word giving an iconic indexical delivered to the people (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). The transmodal production of these words connects privilege and status through objectified things or terms. Irshad and Yousaf (2024) emphasized the intricate connections between the various forms of communication involved in producing multimodal creations. Transmodal aspects of language help students to interpret and understand narratives that depict foreign languages, and transmodal communication with visual and verbal modes. This paradigm makes it easier to communicate cultural ideas in a variety of settings which enables students to make a transmodal shift from linguistic to visual-linguistic and from written narrative to multimodal storytelling (Govender, 2020). This textual unity and inter-semiotic harmony are keys for the performative production of order, which is, in turn, central to the classification of distinction and (elite) status (Thurlow & Haudenschild, 2022).

Language materiality offers significant mediated cognitive and emotional agencies to investigate communication problems and language ability gaps and improve comprehension of language use in peripheral contexts that are not well served by digital technology. However, despite their grounded arguments for materiality roles, they have not explored authentic moments to moments when meaning-making processes are interwoven and navigated through the entanglement between human and non-human agency. This study intends to fill the gap by investigating transmodal production, from things to words, in creating a chain process of meaning making. All available materials work together as a collective to produce

meaning, involving various semiotic resources and relationships between human and non-human entities (Canagarajah, 2024). As such, this study is an attempt to showcase dynamic interaction of human and non-human agency for English learning affordances and also justice for learning opportunities in a peripheral context, particularly for indigenous Dayak students in Kalimantan which has wealthily embraced materiality in their lives. This study also investigates material which encompasses not only objects but also bodily elements that serve as tools or resources in the quest for knowledge (Sugiharto, 2022b) such as Gawai (Thanksgiving in Dayaknese tradition) serving as a transmodal production signifies human gratitude to God through the integration of physical materials and bodily movements (Loi et al., 2023). It indicates that the Dayaknese uses various symbolic, visual signs embedded in their traditional motifs to convey specific meanings in communication that might be employed in English language teaching.

II. METHODS

This research adopts an instant ethnography method which concerns how meaning is made and experienced in the present, in the fleeting moments of daily life by exploring local communities and cultures to create relevant learning affordances (Weprint, 2016). Conducted in a school largely serving the Dayak community rooted in ancestral ritual ceremonies (Atok et al., 2005; Loi et al., 2023), the study involved 64 students who were minimally exposed to English since they did not learn it in their elementary school. Dayak students are selected because they have unique communication patterns characterized by the way they communicate themselves, explain things to their society, and convey their meaning. In this writing, the Dayak materials like bamboo, rinyuank leaves, dauk manggala, and mandau (the traditional machete) are employed as it is used in their daily lives. These materials have particular meanings and are commonly used in their communication.

Data Collection and Procedures

The data were gathered from six video-taped and photographed of teacher and students' interactions during the English class section. Video was used to document student involvement throughout class activities, and photographs were used to capture the rich nuances of natural

settings and activities. Furthermore, photographs offer powerful visual images that complement the observation and reinforce the verbal descriptions. In addition, photographs were taken to enhance the documentation of classroom interactions, capturing live actions and recording snapshots. Following the recording, assisted by a regular English teacher, the activity was jotted down to enhance the vividness of the activities observed (Lodico et al., 2010). Data were collected from various interactions, resulting in a final dataset that included several speakers in similar situations (Lilja, 2023).

Data Analysis

To obtain the data that is relevant with the objective of the study, the data were transcribed and discussed in detail using Multimodal Conversation Analysis (MCA). MCA is employed to examine the video recordings of classroom interactions involving language materiality by analyzing the video transcripts and pictures using Mondada's framework (Tai, 2023; Deppermann & Haugh, 2022, p. 332). The analysis includes identifying material practices, examining language materiality used in class, and describing the interactions that occur in class. Additionally, the authors developed a coding scheme based on objectives of the research and theoretical frameworks which focus on transmodal production of language materiality. The steps in data analysis include identifying and collecting relevant multimodal data from videos and images. Then, data were transcribed using a framework that represents multiple modes, including visual descriptions, speech, gestures, spatial arrangements, and other features.

III. RESULTS

In this section, the writers present the result from the data collection regarding the employment of language materiality and transmodal production as a learning affordance in language learning in dayaknese EFL classroom which is presented in 3 topics, "*It is nice to meet you*", "*It is delicious*", and, "*I've got thick eyebrows*". These three themes were chosen because they make use of resources in activities that could serve as learning materials. The transmodal production and how it serves as learning affordances is presented below:

The first theme employed in this study is related to "*It is nice to meet you*". This theme is utilized in view of the Dayak uniqueness in welcoming the

guest which involved materials such as bamboo, rinyuank leaves (the plants grow in Kalimantan), and Mandau (the traditional weapon) to cut the bamboo. Those materiality plays as a medium for transmodal production in the classroom serves the thing-word process used to convey meanings of the topic. The transmodal production described in table 1 shows that the materiality is present in three phases of learning. Table 1 demonstrates three roles of materiality aiming to develop the expression of "*It is nice to meet you.*" First, the organization of materials consisting of bamboo, and rinyuank leaves reflect the way that the Dayak welcome their guests, second, the act of accepting Mandau symbolizes readiness to engage in the guest-receiving process, and third, dancing and rinyuank leaves symbolize joyfulness. These practices demonstrate how meaning is interwoven from the students' lens of materiality and symbolizing their own identities. The table below shows how materiality is applied as a transmodal production and its utilization in the EFL classroom.

Table 1. Transmodal Production of "Bamboo and Mandau" Used in Language Learning

Transmodal Production (Things-Words)	Utilization of the Materials in EFL Classroom
Bamboo and Rinyuank Leave	The materials are arranged and organized to demonstrate that the Dayak community greets their esteemed guests.
Mandau and bamboo	The Mandau used to cut the bamboo, and bamboo are placed horizontally indicating barriers
Students dancing, Rinyunak Leaves	Dancing and rinyuank leave in hand for dancing is the attribute to welcome the guest

The Table illustrates how materials are organized and used as resources for transmodal production in EFL learning opportunities. These materials are structured to motivate students to participate in real-life situations while learning English. The arrangement of Mandau, bamboo, and rinyuank leaves indicates a formal environment where specific guest welcoming protocols must be adhered to. These materials encourage students to learn and interact with English in accordance with these welcoming customs. In this setup, accepting the Mandau, a traditional sword, symbolizes the guest's (represented by the teacher) willingness to join the community. Conversely, rejecting it signifies a reluctance to become part of the

community. Additionally, using the Mandau to cut the bamboo illustrates the guests' eagerness to integrate into the community. The materials also transition into movement through dancing, with the students' performances expressing their happiness and warm welcome to the guests, showcasing their delight in meeting newcomers. This sequence involving Mandau, bamboo, and dancing creates a transmodal production that helps students grasp the concept of "It is nice to meet you."

The second theme employed in this study is related to "*It is Delicious*". This theme is considered significant for the classroom activities since the Dayaknese also talk about food with its specific characteristics. The transmodal production from the theme of "It is delicious" utilizes dauk manggala and bamboo as materiality that is popular in the community. The materials are displayed in front of the class as the teacher explained and link it with the topic. The Table below shows the transmodal and its utilization in the classroom.

Table 2. Transmodal Production from "Dauk Manggala" Used in Language Learning

Transmodal Production (Things-Words)	Utilization of the Materials in EFL Classroom
Transmodal production (things-word) (Topic 2)	Dauk Manggala as the material and bamboo as the medium of cooking it are displayed in front of the class

In topic 2, the teacher introduced the idea of deliciousness to the students by using local food items, such as cassava leaves, referred to locally as "Dauk Manggala". Dauk Manggala was used to represent the taste of food, in contrast to other foods that the students might not have been familiar with. The teacher demonstrated embodiment by giving thumbs up to food, indicating a transmodal expression of its taste. In this topic, the teacher incorporated materiality such as dauk manggala and bamboo as the materiality of ethnicity to express deliciousness rather than employing other types of food that were not familiar to them. The teacher started the class by explaining that dauk manggala and bamboo were incorporated as media to describe the topic "*It is delicious*". The teacher posed questions while showing the materiality of "dauk manggala" to students to invite them to participate in the class.

This section emphasizes how students and teachers engaged with materiality in EFL

environments. They concentrated on the term "dauk Manggala" and its transmodal representation. The teacher encouraged the students to ask, "Mengapa suka dauk manggala?" to elicit opinions about the dish. Student 1 quickly replied with "Good," followed by student 2 who said, "*Delicious*," and student 3 added, "*Great*." These responses align with the transmodal indicator, prompting students to connect "dauk manggala" with high quality, enjoyable taste, and exceptional qualities. The process of forming habits through interaction with objects is often viewed as acquiring embodied skills, allowing individuals to perform actions with ease. This illustrates how students and teachers leverage materiality to cultivate their habits, focusing on the term "dauk Manggala" and its transmodal representation, which consistently led students to associate "dauk manggala" with superior quality, flavor, and remarkable attributes.

The third theme employed in this study is "*I've Got Thick Eyebrows*". This theme is selected because it is closely related to describing people either physically or characteristics. The materials applied are related to physical and dressing where the teacher aimed to teach the concept of physical appearance through the topic "I've got thick eyebrows." The teacher showcasing the image of a local individual who fits the criteria relevant to the lesson. The presence of this figure illustrates a transmodal representation of how individuals appear in relation to their appearance. These five data points show the transmodal of the things-word from three topics. Based on the data, the main emphasis of the activity was on transforming objects into words using different modes. Dayak students employed tangible items as instruments to understand particular objects, actions, processes, and the core of different subjects. This implies that incorporating these culture materials as a means of learning English in the classroom is appropriate.

Table 3. Transmodal Production from "Local Figure and Traditional Attire" Used in Language Learning

Transmodal Production (Things-Words)	Utilization of the Materials in EFL Classroom
Transmodal production (things-word) (Topic 3)	Local figure presented in the class (Bajigur) and Traditional attire worn by the figure to display the local figure.

This example describes the term used Bajigur and the traditional attire he wears. In the Dayak

Kanayatnregion, Bajigur is described as an energetic and mischievous boy, or the society adopted it as an abbreviation for “Bujang penganggur,” which signifies unemployed person. Bajigur embodies material manifestations and serves as artistic reimagining (transformation, aesthetic adaptation, and physical expression). Additionally, a full range of traditional Dayak attire, including headbands, vests, and shields, is presented to enhance students’ understanding of commodification. The teacher and students utilized language in tangible ways in the EFL classroom.

Additional information is also provided to show resources that offer learning affordances for students. The table below shows that organized materials can communicate a sense of hospitality to visitors. The gesture of receiving Mandau indicates a willingness to engage in the welcoming ceremony, while dancing implies happiness. A thumbs-up gesture conveys approval or enjoyment, and the term “cool” arises from the interaction between the materials worn by the teacher and their body movements. Further details regarding this process are provided below.

Table 4. Meaning Making Through Ethnic Materials in Language Learning

Transmodal Production (Things-Words)	Meaning in EFL Classroom
Bamboo and Rinyuank Leaves	The arrangement of materials illustrating the Dayak community greets their esteemed guests.
Mandau and Bamboo	Received Mandau to Cut the Bamboo indicate willingness to be friends
Students and Rinyuank Leaves	Dancing shows happiness to welcome a new people
Dauk Manggala	The use of Dauk Manggala indicate the taste of food
Traditional Attire of Dayak, and the local Figure	The students associate the material to the adjective of the word “keren” or “Cool” indicating there is a word produced from the figure.

The Table suggests that the meaning was formed through various combinations of materials. The arrangement of bamboo with local leaves suggests that there is an underlying intention that both teachers and students should follow. This setup serves as a transmodal element that generates specific meanings for students as it relates to their everyday experiences. This information indicates that the teacher was open to accepting Mandau, a traditional tool for cutting bamboo.

This gesture signified that the newcomer arrived with positive intentions towards the community and was genuinely eager to integrate into it. The aforementioned actions affect how students, who portray local residents, respond to the arrival of guests. To show enthusiasm to host the newcomer warmly, dancing acts as a cheerful way to welcome new members to the community. The sequence of the three actions suggests that the thing is the medium of meaning making, especially in grasping the theme of “*It’s nice to meet you*” topic. In other instances, the teacher uses a thumbs-up gesture and responding with “keren” or “Cool” in topic 2 and 3 respectively shows a shift from physical expressions to verbal communication due to the tangible context. The details suggest that resources centered on daily routines within the community significantly impact English learning in that particular group. When integrated with others, these materials express distinct meanings and inspire students to expand their thinking beyond their mere vocabulary. Students can reflect on their ideas, processes, and shapes.

IV. DISCUSSION

To understand how materiality serves as a learning resource and transmodal Production (things-words) in providing learning affordances in EFL classrooms, we explored the interpretation of materials’ use and function, connecting them to established theories in English language teaching as discussed below.



Figure 1. Rinyuank Leaves and Bamboo in the classroom

In most situations and facets of daily social life, materials are present and play a crucial role in human interaction and the interaction between people and their surroundings (Nevile et al., 2014). Figure 1 above displays bamboo shown to visitors in the Dayak region based on the topic “*It is nice to meet you*”. The picture depicts the entire setup of supplies needed to welcome the guest and the host’s greeting procedure. The teacher took on the

role of a guest, while the students served as hosts. In keeping with the tradition of the ceremony, one student took on the role of village chair, while two other students served as dancers. The bamboo arranged horizontally alongside the rinyuang leaves signals that their arrangement is a status-making effort to make meaning (Thurlow & Haudenschild, 2022). This implies that in this scenario, no outsider is permitted to access the area without prior approval from the residents. The placement of the bamboo and rinyuang leaves serves as a clear signal to the students that unless the outsider has cut the bamboo, they do not belong to the community. Conversely, once the newcomer successfully cuts bamboo, they are invited to join the community. This activity, which uses local resources, assists students in grasping the idea of “*It is nice to meet you*” in their English studies. Transmodals include both the interaction of various modes and the connections among these modes, alongside the contextual setting of the communication event. Irshad and Yousaf (2024) mention this interplay can be complex and influenced by various factors, such as cultural, historical, and situational aspects, that affect how meaning is created through the engagement of different modes. Furthermore, the concept of transmodality introduces an angle of examination of how various modalities do more than just enhance one another; they also sequentially overlap and intermingle (Nordvall et al., 2016). According to Wee (2021), language resources in posthumanism present intriguing problems and difficulties for current understanding of language, requiring a reconsideration of the presumptions. Furthermore, Sugiharto and Handayani (2025) mention that posthuman examines the idea of repertory and argues that transcending humanism notions of person and community might lead to a deeper understanding. In order to improve our comprehension of language, people, things, and agency, it encourages the investigation of distributed linguistic and spatial repertoires.

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Figure 2. Receiving Mandau to Cut the Bamboo

To further explore concepts connected to materiality, the activity depicted in picture 2 above demonstrates transmodal production. In this activity, upon receiving Mandau, the guest was required to slice the bamboo to indicate that there were no barriers between him, as a stranger, and the members of the community. If he succeeded in doing so, he was free to proceed. By doing this, the host showed the visitors that they were part of the group and pleasant to encounter. This situation demonstrates that there was a form of transmodal production among the teacher and students that transformed ideas into language. This interaction enabled each participant to act in accordance with a shared understanding of society. They can

infer meaning from an object and utilize different symbols and physical resources to generate knowledge (Rabbi, 2023; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). The activity shows mutually-informing resources, like body orientation, gaze direction, and object participation are crucial because it makes up a social interaction (Richardson & Stokoe, 2014).



Figure 3. Students Dance to Welcome the Guest

Additionally, while entering the area, the guest was ushered in by dancers going to his place. Dancing indexes happiness of meeting new people or a form of transmodal production of dancing to words. Bertinetto (2021) mentions that artifacts, such as artworks and various cultural items, are not lifeless, they actively embody the influences and intentions behind their creation and convey their purpose, function, and significance through their physical form. This semiotic resource connects the lesson about “It is nice to meet you.” The dancing conducted by the two dancers shows behavior that highlights their kindness and joy in meeting new people. It is important to note that dancing represents their joy upon seeing the visitors, the dancers also serving as indicators of transmodal expressions to convey their happiness (Rabbi, 2023; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017).

Another prominent example depicts how materiality was used as a source of transmodal



Figure 4. Transmodal Production from Dauk Manggala

production from the theme two, “*It is delicious*”, which deals with the English expression of taste. The teacher employed materiality like *dauk manggala* to be demonstrated with students.

Excerpt 2. Transmodal Production from “It is Delicious” Topic

Line	Minutes	Actors	Verbatim
01	00:01:42	Teacher	*--->Mengapa suka dauk manggala? (Why do you like dauk manggala?)
02	00:01:44 00:01:55	student	++ (1) Good ++ (2) Delicious ++ (3) Great Students guesst it from the teacher's thumb for good

In order to show what the doer has grasped, how they understand it, and what parts of it have been made important, *dauk manggala* is employed in this section as a manipulated and shaped object (Mondada, 2014, p. 200). This section highlights how students and teacher utilized the materiality in EFL settings. They focused on the language term “*dauk Mangala*” and its transmodal representation. In line 01, the teacher prompted the students to ask, “*Mengapa suka dauk manggala?*” or why do you like *dauk manggala*, to gather thoughts related to the dish. Student 1 quickly responded with “*Good,*” after which Student 2 added, “*Delicious,*” and Student 3 chimed in with “*Great.*” Those words align the transmodal indicator and encourage the students to associate “*dauk manggala*” with top quality, pleasing flavor, and outstanding attributes. Bertinetto (2021) mentions that the process of developing habits through interaction with objects is typically seen as acquiring embodied skills, enabling the user to perform actions effortlessly, and it is connected to sensorimotor experiences, social interactions, and repeated everyday routines. It shows how students and teachers utilize materiality to develop their habits. They focused on the language term “*dauk Mangala*” and its transmodal representation. This is consistent with the transmodal signal which caused the students to link “*dauk manggala*” with high quality, flavor, and excellent characteristics (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). Students benefit from transmodal language features as it enables them to communicate both verbally and visually, and interpret including comprehend stories that use foreign languages. This paradigm facilitates the communication of cultural concepts in a range of contexts, allowing students to “transmodal shift” from written narrative to multimodal

storytelling and from language to visual-linguistic (Govender, 2020). The performative manufacture of order, which is essential to the categorization of distinction and (elite) status, depends on this textual unity and “inter-semiotic harmonys” (Thurlow & Haudenschild, 2022).

Having discussed the previous example, the writers now examine other phenomena of the class interaction from another theme. In this theme, the writers present two pictures regarding the theme *I've got thick eyebrows* to express someone's appearance. The explanation is presented as follows.



Figure 5. The Teacher Wearing a Full set of Dayak Traditional Attire

Excerpt 3. Transmodal Production from Topic 3

Line	Minutes	Actors	Verbatim
01	00:00:03 00:00:11	Teacher Today..we will learn about Bajigur Do you know Bajigur?
02	00:00:15	Students	Bajigur is....
03	00:00:15	Teacher	Bajigur is....
04	00:00:18	Students	ΔΔ keren...keren Cool.....cool

In the transcript, the teacher informed the students that they would explore Bajigur to create transmodal outputs from visual representation. This was aimed at developing semiotic resources to introduce the phrase *“I have got thick eyebrows.”* The teacher asked, *‘Are you familiar with Bajigur?’* in line 01, and promptly in line 04, students replied, “Keren.. Keren or *cool...cool* as a commentary on the appearance of Bajigur. At this point, the students effectively generated meaning by using “keren” to describe the Bajigur that was adorned in full Dayak ceremony attire, suggesting attractiveness. The term “keren” showcases the students’ comprehension of how to depict individuals within the context of the theme *“I have got thick eyebrows.”* This shows that Bajigur, when exhibited in its elaborate decoration, reflects certain ideas or, in this situation, serves as an iconic index that conveys specific meaning

to students (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). The teacher acting as a Bajigur relies on semiotic and material resources supporting students in creating knowledge and engaging in genuine learning experiences (Rabbi, 2023).



Figure 6. The Students Responded on Wrong Position of Material

Excerpt 4. Students Respond to the Teacher Movement.

Line	Minutes	Actors	Verbatim
01	00:00:33	Teacher	---- Dia begini kan Bajigurnya kan? ----- (<i>Bajigur like this</i>)
02	00:00:33	Student	---- Iya ----- (<i>Yes, it is</i>)
13	00:00:50	Teacher	ΔΔ Bagaimana dengan posisi ini? Benar atau salah? (<i>Is this position correct?</i>) (<i>the shield is on the right and Mandau is on the left</i>)
04	00:00:51	Students	++ Tidak ++ (<i>No, it is not</i>)
05	00:00:51	Teacher	++ Tidak?...wrong? ++ (<i>No...wrong</i>)
06	00:00:54	Students	++ Wrong

The teacher inquired the positioning of the Bajigur to which the students responded “*iya*” indicating their agreement. However, when the teacher altered the arrangement of the shield and posed the same question again, some students replied “*tidak*,” which means “No”, while others said “*wrong*” (noting that the shield was on the right and Mandau was on the left). At this point, students were able to challenge the teacher’s actions by pointing out the error by saying “*wrong*.” This indicates that making appropriate use of different modalities and translating between them in design can facilitate understanding, make information more accessible, improve communication, stimulate critique, and improve the inclusion of people with sensory disabilities (Nordvall et al., 2016). This activity demonstrates that the teacher’s falsification of the materials helped students construct transmodal meaning by using objects and transforming them into words. As a

consequence, it ultimately encourages students to express “wrong” as a sign of disagreement. In this case, materiality of language serves as a demonstration of privilege and status, while social semiotics and transmodalisation play a role in its interpretation. Transmodals empower students to engage in knowledge construction and meaningful learning experiences through diverse semiotic and material resources (Rabbi, 2023).

Prior sections indicate that transmodal production of language as a sign aids in deducing and interpreting specific meanings (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). The teacher prompted the students to repeat the words and complied with them individually. Each time a student accurately echoed the teacher’s words, they were acknowledged with a thumb up. Bertinotto (2021) noted that developing habits through interaction with materials is often viewed as a means of acquiring physical skills, allowing individuals to act with ease, and engagement with materials illustrates how students’ comprehension of language helps them assess and appreciate nuanced cultural contexts and sharpen their awareness (Banda & Mokwena, 2019; Miller, 2017). Transmodal approaches enable students to partake in the construction of knowledge and enjoy enriching their learning experiences through various semiotic and material tools (Rabbi, 2023).

Ethnic Materiality Offers Ample Room for Meaning Making Process

Ethnic materiality is considered as material cultural discourse that has communicative function and function as a meaning making source (Sugiharto & Handayani, 2025). The data reveals that the materiality of particular ethnic groups provides a specific meaning for transmodal production in EFL environments. Table 2 presents how materiality generates meaning based on the context through the organization of objects, along with other materials and physical actions. Materiality generates meaning depending on the context of the activity through the arrangement of objects along with other materials and physical movements. The act of receiving Mandau, dancing, a thumbs-up gesture expresses approval or enjoyment, and the term “cool” emerges from the interaction between the materials worn by teachers and their body movements (Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows some materials used to demonstrate welcoming guests’ rituals in the Dayak

area. The picture shows that specific materials, such as horizontally positioned bamboo alongside rinyuank leaves, enhance the actor’s capacity to express the concept of welcoming guests through nonverbal cues and visuals in their learning repertoire (Hall, 2019; Roehl, 2012). Language acquisition is facilitated by specific materials that play a role in creating meaning (Canagarajah, 2024; Hall, 2019). Wee (2021) noted that signs can have material effects on other signs by initiating an assemblage process. This means that other signs can represent the material world even though the semiotic must make an effort to connect to it. Moreover, the position of the rinyuang leaves alongside the bamboo suggests that these symbolic features work together to deliver a strong message regarding an individual being barred from access to another area, indicating that they are not isolated from one another or from humanity but rather form an integrated, cohesive unit (Pennycook, 2024). Additionally, the students presented Mandau to the teacher, which was another form of transmodal expression signaling that the teacher needed to cut bamboo before he could enter the space. Finally, it is important to note that dancing represented their joy upon seeing the visitors, with the dancers also serving as indicators of transmodal expressions to convey their happiness (Rabbi, 2023; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017).

In supporting more ideas related to the role of materiality in the EFL classroom of dayaknese indigenous students, the transmodal production is shown in figure 2. In this activity, once the guest received Mandau, he had to cut off the bamboo; if he succeeded in doing so, he was free to proceed. By doing this, the host showed the visitors that they were part of the group and pleasant to encounter. This situation demonstrates that there was a form of transmodal production between the teacher and students that transformed ideas into language. This interaction enabled participants to act in accordance with a shared understanding of society. They can infer meaning from an object and utilize different symbols and physical resources to generate knowledge (Rabbi, 2023; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017).

Another example of the meaning making process from the transmodal production is shown in figure 3 in the discussion section to depict the practice. Based on the image, while entering the area, the guest was ushered in by dancers going to

space provided, and dancing in this case indexes the topic: it is nice to meet new people or a form of transmodal production of things to words or dancing. This semiotic resource connects the lesson between teacher and students with the topic, “It is nice to meet you.” The topic “it is nice to meet you,” exposes how teachers and students show behavior that highlights their kindness and joy in meeting new individuals during this activity (Cavanaugh, 2017). When the students then gave the guest permission by making a hand motion to go along with, it indicated they had allowed the guest to enter, and at the same time dancing followed, signifying that they are hospitable to the distinguished visitors to their region with dancing. This indicates that body movement through dancing signifies knowledge that tells people about their hospitality. This finding is in line with Sugiharto (2022) that the soma (living body) functions as the center for the desire to create and recreate knowledge which is presented in the case of the Dayaknese people in Borneo, exemplifies a somatic society in which the practices related to the physical body are prominently reflected in their educational methods. Furthermore, Sugiharto (2022a) adds that somaesthetics focus on actions rather than just verbal expressions. From the picture, both hand motions (embodied) and dancing (aesthetic) were ways for individuals to welcome guests and show their happiness based on their shared understanding. The students’ hand motions and dancing show that welcoming guests are related to the topic “It is nice to meet you” (Johnson, 2017; Kasper & Kim, 2015; Richardson & Stokoe, 2014). While entering the area, the guest was ushered in by dancers going to the space, and dancing indexes the topic regarding to meet new people or a form of transmodal production of things to words or dancing. This semiotic resource connects the lesson between the teacher and students with the topic, “It is nice to meet you.” The topic “it is nice to meet you”, discusses how teachers and students show behavior that highlights their kindness and joy in meeting new individuals during this activity (Cavanaugh, 2017).

To provide additional examples of transmodal production involving language materiality in the EFL classroom showing transmodal production, a dialogue alongside a picture about “dauk Manggala” is outlined below.



Figure 7. Transmodal Production from dauk manggala

Excerpt 5. The Students Exploring More Words and Phrase from the materials

Line	Minutes	Actors	Verbatim
01	00:02:01	Teacher	... So dauk manggala itu gratis, murah atau mahal? (So, is dauk manggala free, cheap or expensive?)
02	00:02:04	Students	++ Gratissss (free)
03	00:02:06	teacher	Dauk manggala is.... (pause)
04	00:02:07	Student	*---> Bisa dicari (easily found)
05	00:02:07	Students	*---> free
06	00:02:10	Teacher	Kalau murah? (What is cheap)
07	00:02:15	Students	*---> Chep..chep ...some students pronoun the word wrong...some other said Cheap...cheap
08	00:02:18	Teacher	Ya ..cheap murah
09	00:02:19		Ok kalau mahal? (What is expensive)
10	00:02:20	Students	*---> Expensive.....

This section highlights how students and teachers use materiality. The teacher went on to ask, ‘Is dauk manggala free, cheap, or expensive?’ The students answered with “free.” The teacher then clarified again, saying, ‘Dauk manggala is...?’ (pause) as a way of prompting students to look up “*gratis*” in their dictionaries. Shortly, one student found it and responded with “*Free*”. Next, the teacher asked about the word “*murah*” or cheap. The students replied with “*chep*”; some pronounced it as “*chep*,” while others articulated it as “*cheap*”. Through this dialog, it was found that materiality provides a deep understanding of a concept beyond vocabulary, and students can imagine more than what is expected from learning, like merely vocabulary. This is in line with Andrzejewski and Heinrich (2021) that artifacts as both tools and entities in intense emotions like love or hatred, feelings that are usually associated with living beings.

Furthermore, another example of transmodal production for meaning making is shown from

topic 3 through a figure called Bajigur (a figure in the Dayak community) who is acting as a model to describe his appearance related to “*I’ve got a thick eyebrow*”. It is an application from the concept proposed by Kurkowski and Andrzejewski (2021), being physically intertwined with a design piece involves recognizing that our interaction with the object includes assessing not just the object itself but also individual corporeal presence. In simpler terms, it is the combination of the object, observer, and their interaction, which contributes to the aesthetic appreciation of design items. Furthermore, the figure of Bajigur is incorporated as an alternative effort to incorporate sociolinguistic, sociocognitive, sociocultural, ecological, and complexity theories in second language acquisition (SLA), which develops models that prioritize nonverbal resources, mediation, and embodiment (Canagarajah, 2018). The use of Bajigur is merely a way to use language since Ahearn (2017) mentions that various aspects of difference and inequality can influence and be influenced by how language is used. Factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, age, regional identification, caste, and profession are examples of social variations that can interact with linguistic behavior often intertwined in a complex manner. The use of the term “Bajigur” is also a lively communication habits by blending (informal) Indonesian and English to illustrate the implementation of the practice of decolonial rupture and the establishment of a gap to foster ‘interspecificity of knowledge relationships’ and to clarify ‘one’s specific position of participation and expression (Sugiharto, 2023). The writers provide the following dialogue segment accompanied by a picture, showcasing the idea of transmodal production across different subjects and material scenarios in the EFL classroom.



Figure 8. Transmodal Meaning from a Movement

Excerpt 6. The Teacher Commodifies the Language Form of “Bajigur”

Line	Minutes	Actors	Verbatim
01	00:00:50	Teacher	ΔΔ Bagaimana dengan posisi ini? Benar atau salah? (<i>Is this position correct?</i>) (<i>the shield is on the right and Mandau is on the left</i>)
02	00:00:51	Students	++ Tidak ++ (<i>No, it is not</i>)
03	00:00:51	Teacher	++ Tidak?...wrong? ++ (<i>No...wrong</i>)
04	00:00:54	Students	++ Wrong

This activity shows transmodal production because it is demonstrated by an occurrence where the teacher asked the position of Mandau, some students replied “tidak,” while others said “wrong” (noting that the shield was on the right and Mandau was on the left). At this point, the students were able to challenge the teacher’s actions by pointing out the error by saying “wrong.” This is in line with Irshad and Yousaf’s (2024) finding that the concept of transmodalities recognizes the complex interactions and links among various forms of communication that play a role in the creation of multimodal works. This event demonstrates that the teacher’s manipulation of the materials helped the students construct transmodal meanings through objects and transform them into words, ultimately encouraging them to express “wrong” as a sign of disagreement. In this case, the materiality of language serves as a demonstration of privilege and status, while social semiotics and transmodalisation play a role in its interpretation. Moreover, transmodals empower students to engage in knowledge construction and meaningful learning experiences through diverse semiotic and material resources (Rabbi, 2023).

Transmodal production is the key to creating meaning. It enhances an individual’s ability to convey concepts using nonverbal signals and visual aids as part of their learning sources (Hall, 2019; Roehl, 2012). Additionally, it provides particular materials essential for meaning-making, as various signs can influence one another by triggering the process of assembly (Canagarajah, 2024; Hall, 2019; Canagarajah, 2024; Wee, 2021). The materiality of language, viewed as part of transmodal production which is interconnected with humanity and does not exist in isolation. Instead, they work together to form a unified system indicating transmodal expressions that communicate emotions, derive meaning from objects, and involve different symbols and tangible resources to foster knowledge (Rabbi,

2023; Sugiharto, 2022a; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). Furthermore, transmodal production enables students to partake in the process of knowledge construction and shifts them towards enriching learning experiences by employing a variety of semiotic and material resources. It means that this approach enriches learning experiences by leveraging both semiotic resources such as language, imagery, sound, and gesture, and material resources. Rabbi (2023) mentions that materiality encourages students to visualize their learning beyond traditional expectations for their learning by supporting hands-on experiences that deepen their understanding of subjects and go beyond simple language.

The explanation above shows how materials benefit in the meaning making process through the idea of transmodal production; however, educational contexts where flexible or emergent approaches successfully foster multimodal learning without rigid structures should also be considered in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, despite concerns about power dynamics limiting student agency, some learning environments should also actively empower students by encouraging them to choose and prioritize semiotic resources themselves. Therefore, it is critical that future investigation on the efforts focused on integrating and assessing multimodal outputs and exploring more learner-centered and adaptive methods may offer alternative ways to value diverse modes in education.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the aforementioned discussion, it can be summarized that language materiality in the classroom can be used as a tool for transmodal production. It is used to generate knowledge by influencing, facilitating, and altering how people engage with facts, experiences, and ideas. It uses a variety of symbols and material resources as instruments to provide meaning to various objects. Thus, knowledge is viewed as a dynamic, contextual result that arises from material interactions and practices rather than only from textual communication or mental activity. The organized materials illustrate how the Dayak community integrates these resources into their everyday practices, such as greeting honored guests, cooking, and describing people's appearances. This

demonstrates how material interactions become a means of knowledge production, wherein objects are useful tools and living repositories of tradition, law, spirituality and ecological citizenship. Such integration helps to ensure the endurance of cultural heritage, though with transformation in response to contemporary conditions. Transmodal production through materiality enables students to participate in knowledge-building activities, enriching students' learning experiences by leveraging diverse semiotic and tangible resources. This hands-on approach encourages practical experiences that deepen the understanding of concepts and motivates students to broaden their thinking beyond conventional academic limits.

Ethnic group variety, however, may result in a homogenized portrayal that ignores individual experiences and differences in cultural identity. Therefore, a cross-cultural comparative study to investigate how various cultural communities use materiality in educational situations and examining more learner-centered and adaptive approaches to integrate and evaluate multimodal outputs may provide different approaches to appreciate various modes in education and future research. Comparative research may uncover distinctive methods and materials that improve education across cultural contexts, offering a more comprehensive view of transmodal production by improving the comprehension and use of language materiality and transmodal production in educational contexts by following these research avenues, which eventually result in more inclusive and productive learning environments.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their identities have been kept strictly anonymous to ensure confidentiality. The research fully complies with the ethical standards and publication guidelines of Jurnal Arbitrer.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Magpika Handayani conceptualized the study, reviewed the literature, designed the methodology, analyzed data, and edited for the final draft production.

Luciana verified the data, and reviewed the draft.

Setiono Sugiharto reviewed and edited the draft, proofread, and supervised the writing process.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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