

**Using Multimedia Composing Programs to Develop EFL
University Students' Functional Writing Performance and
Decrease their Anxiety**

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تعد مهارة الكتابة واحدة من أهم مهارات تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، إلا أنها تشكل التحدي الأكبر في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية إذ تمثل عقبة تقف في طريق المتعلمين. حيث أظهرت الدراسات الحديثة خلافاً في السبل التقليدية لتدريس كتابة اللغة الإنجليزية. فعلى سبيل المثال لا الحصر، فإن معظم كتابات الطلاب تكون مقيدة بالصف الدراسي مما ينتج عنه قصور في الأداء الكتابي. وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن العديد من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية يعانون من مشكلات في الكتابة، وما يتبعها من قلق الأداء الكتابي.

مع تطوير بحث EFL (الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية) للكتابة ، يجب أن تتضمن عملية الكتابة الفعالة لمتعلمي EFL وظائف كتابة العملية ، وتعليم المعلم ، وتفاعل الأقران ' والتعاون. تؤكد الكتابة الموجهة نحو العملية ، مع التركيز على عملية الكتابة ، على التفاعل والمراجعة مع إرشادات المعلمين '. وفي الوقت نفسه ، تتمتع أدوات SNS (خدمات الشبكات الاجتماعية) مثل Instance Messenger (IM) و vlog بميزة التفاعل القوي وإمكانية تحسين التعاون بين المتعلمين. أجرت هذه الدراسة بحثاً تجريبياً يطبق أنشطة مجموعة vlog داخل وخارج فئة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية ، بهدف التحقيق في تأثيرها على أداء الكتابة للمتعلمين '. قامت بدمج أنشطة التأليف متعدد الوسائط القائمة على SNS في التعليم العالي ، بهدف تحديد آثاره على أداء الكتابة للمتعلمين '. في حين تحسن أداء الكتابة لفئتين ' بين الاختبار المسبق والاختبار اللاحق ، كانت مكاسب المجموعة التجريبية في ثلاثة جوانب تفصيلية (قابلية القراءة والتعقيد المعجمي والتعقيد النحوي) أكبر بكثير. تمت مناقشة هذه النتائج فيما يتعلق بالخصائص المحددة للتكوين متعدد الوسائط والتعلم القائم على SNS الذي يمكّن المتعلمين من تحسين أداء الكتابة الوظيفية. كما تم إجراء مسح حول تصورات المتعلمين ' والمواقف تجاه تطبيق vlog كتابةً بين المتعلمين في مجموعة vlog. نظر معظم المتعلمين إلى مدونة الفيديو على أنها طريقة ممتعة وفعالة لتعزيز أداء الكتابة وتقليل قلقهم.

Abstract

With the development of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writing research, an effective writing process of EFL learners should involve functions of process writing, teacher's instruction, peers' interaction and collaboration. Process-oriented writing, focusing on the writing process, emphasizes interactivity and revision with teachers' guidance. Meanwhile, SNS (Social Networking Services) tools such as Instance Messenger (IM) and vlog have the advantage of strong interactivity and the potential of improving cooperation among learners. This study carried out an experimental research applying vlog group activities inside and outside English writing class, with the aim of investigating its effect on learners' writing performance. It integrated SNS-based multimodal composing activities into higher education, with the aim of determining its effects on learners' writing performance. Two classes in junior tertiary education (Freshmen at the American University in Cairo) were recruited, one class of 15 students as the control group without using SNS- based multimodal composing, and the other as the experimental group. While two classes' writing performance improved between pretest and posttest, the gains of the experimental group in three detailed aspects (readability, lexical complexity and syntactic complexity) were significantly larger . These findings are discussed in relation to specific characteristics of multimodal composing and SNS-based learning that enables learners to improve functional writing performance. A survey about learners' perceptions and attitudes towards vlog application in writing was also conducted among learners in vlog group. Most learners viewed vlog as an enjoyable and effective way to advance their writing performance and reduce their anxiety.

Keywords: SNS; Multimodal composing; Functional writing; Process-Oriented Writing; Anxiety in Writing, Vlog

Introduction

Writing, serving as one of the most important skills among English learning, is the most challenging area in EFL learning and can be assumed as a difficulty for learners and recent studies have shown disadvantages exist in traditional methods of teaching English writing. For example, most of the students' writing is classroom bounded, which leads to a lack of authenticity. Moreover, some EFL learners have writing anxiety, which leads to poor writing performance. There are no exact methods as to how learners can improve EFL writing as different approaches provide different results. The traditional single-modal teaching method, such as only text or pictures separately, mainly being dominant by teachers, has been unable to meet the needs of students and gave birth to multimodal learning.

Social networking services (SNS), online platforms which allow users to share ideas, digital photos, music and videos and to inform others about online or real-world activities, hold considerable promises for improving the functional writing performance of EFL learners, who have been found to experience lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of authenticity when finishing tasks in these online environments than in traditional classroom paper writing. SNS can be a tool whereby students are encouraged to use their creativity combined with personal expressions to improve and strengthen their writing performance, and it embodies the characteristics of multimodal composing. Multimodal composing with SNS allows for better communication of personal knowledge and expressions through various modes of representation (Shin D. C., 2008).

Vlogs, as one of the most enjoyable SNS, often combine embedded videos with a supporting text, images, etc., which provide a visual design that written blogs cannot. Vlog making is a typical multimodal composing activity in which learners experience the organization and distribution of language, audio, video, picture, animation and other multimodal resources.

It is assumed that learners would be motivated and more engaged in English writing if Vlogs were applied to English writing teaching. For example, Saiful (2019) found that EFL teachers, who used Vlogs to teach English vocabularies and genre-based texts, believed that the implications of Vlogs in teaching could be the driving force of students' various learning styles.

Statement of the Problem

EFL university students encounter significant deficiency in functional writing performance. Therefore, the researcher adopted Vlog multimodal composing based on SNS to enhance EFL university students' performance in functional writing and reduce their FLAW.

Questions

The current study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of using multimodal composing based on Vlog to enhance EFL university learners' functional writing performance by answering the following central question;

“What is the effectiveness of multimodal composing Program based on Vlogs – i.e., by using multimodal modes such as pictures, videos, etc-on improving EFL university students' functional writing performance?”

To answer the aforementioned main question, the researcher answered the following sub-questions.

RQ1. Is the application of multimodal composing based on vlogs effective in improving EFL university students' functional writing performance?

RQ2. What are the major intervention effects of multimodal composing based on vlogs in this study?

RQ3. What are EFL university students' perceptions of and attitudes toward practicing functional writing on multimodal composing based on vlogs in this study?

Aims

“This study aims at examining the effectiveness of using multimodal composing based on vlogs program on improving EFL university learners’ functional writing performance and reduce their anxiety level related to this skill.”

Specific aims are:

1. Improving functional writing skills that EFL university students need to prepare them for the job market.
2. The effectiveness of the application of multimodal composing based on vlog program on improving EFL university learners’ functional writing performance.
3. The effectiveness of multimodal composing based on vlog program on enhancing EFL university learners’ functional writing via collaborative learning.
4. The effect of collaborative multimodal composing based on vlogs program on decreasing FLAW related to functional writing performance

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it assists in allowing EFL university learners to make good use of their tech devices in English language learning; specifically multimodal composing based on Vlogs. Moreover, it may overcome anxiety experienced when they write in English as a foreign language. Besides, this study attempts to supply students with one of the 21st-century skills and a perfect way of constructing knowledge; namely, collaboration. Furthermore, this study helps teachers integrate new ways to enhance writing skills in general and functional writing in particular through new multimodal composing affordances found in smartphones and tablets. Teachers are required to lead their students in this techno-era as well

as directing them to the right path of using technology.

Limitations

The expected findings are restricted to university students “freshmen” to which the participants are affiliated. However, other ELT schools and centers can benefit from the findings.

Literature Review

Writing, serving as one of the most important skills among English learning, is the most challenging area in EFL learning and can be assumed as a difficulty for learners and recent studies have shown disadvantages exist in traditional methods of teaching English writing. For example, most of the students’ writing is classroom bounded, which leads to a lack of authenticity. Moreover, some EFL learners have writing anxiety, which leads to poor writing performance. There are no exact methods as to how learners can improve EFL writing as different approaches provide different results.

Social networking services (SNS), online platforms which allow users to share ideas, digital photos, music and videos and to inform others about online or real-world activities, hold considerable promises for improving the functional writing performance of EFL learners, who have been found to experience lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of authenticity when finishing tasks in these online environments than in traditional classroom paper writing. SNS can be a tool whereby students are encouraged to use their creativity combined with personal expressions to improve and strengthen their writing performance, and it embodies the characteristics of multimodal composing. Multimodal composing with SNS allows for better communication of personal knowledge and expressions through various modes of representation (Shin D. C., 2008).

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Using SNS such as Facebook or Vlogs for learning has rapidly become a growing trend. Some studies of SNS have indicated that the application of Vlogs into English listening and speaking classes helps learners achieve better results than the use of traditional methods and help alleviate learners' anxiety (Safitri & Khoiriyah, 2017), (Nugroho & Anugerahwati, 2018). Since multimodal composing holds considerable promise for improving the writing performance of EFL learners, it is important to discuss the major intervention effects of multimodal composing applied to EFL functional writing. Some studies have indicated that multimodal composing and Vlogs reduce anxiety about using this target language (Dalton, 2012; Dzekeo, 2017). There is scant research on the application of SNS-based multimodal composing in language writing, but the studies cited above can serve as a basis for further research on this important topic.

Multimodal composing has become an important trend in EFL learning (Mill, 2013). Researchers have documented the effects of multimodal composing on the improvement of EFL learners' learning performance. For instance, Beard and Jeannie (2012) reveal how multimodal documentary essays improved EFL learners' traditional writing performance, and the research results show that multimodal composing can

not only enhance writing performance but also help learners better meet challenges in real life. Darrington and Dousay (2015) discuss that compared with traditional pen and paper writing, the application of multimodal composing to teaching EFL writing can enhance the motivation of students with learning difficulties. Learners have their own preferences on different modes, but visual resources have a more positive influence than traditional methods on writing (Smith, 2017).

A high proportion of Vlog studies in EFL teaching demonstrate that the application increases students' interaction, develops teaching efficacy and helps EFL learners improve language skills (Avci & Askar, 2012). For example, Almurashi (2016) points out that the use of Vlogs helps with teachers' language teaching and learners' performance in English. Much research has been devoted to Vlogs application to the improvement of EFL listening and speaking classes. Vlogs tend to have a positive effect on improving learners' fluency, accuracy, and accent or language complexity (Rakhmanina & Kusmaningrum, 2017). For example, Saputri (2018) proposed that there is a correlation between students watching English YouTube Vlogs and their listening skills. Furthermore, Abkary (2018) demonstrated that EFL learners' processes of making Vlogs can improve their speaking fluency. The effect of Vlogs' application to English listening and speaking class has been seen in many other studies (Lestari, 2019; Wulandari, 2019).

Functional writing refers to those texts that we produce for a specific purpose. All writing has purposes, but functional writing is narrowly targeted at a particular reader, from whom we want to define practical response. Functional writing is intended to fulfill a specific need, like applying for a job, registering to vote, keeping records or publicizing an event. Functional writing covers a wide variety of texts.

Anxiety is defined as a “subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Horwitz et al, 1986). The term anxiety encompasses various constructs. It may refer to the anxiety that one feels in daily life (trait anxiety) or rather to the anxiety associated with specific activities (state anxiety) (Spielberger,1983). However, in the language learning context, a further type of anxiety may be distinguished. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a specific type of anxiety that can be experienced by learners across all language activities and most scholars concur that it is mainly negative for learners (MacIntyre, 2017).

Method

To achieve the aim of this study and examine the effectiveness of using multimedia composing programs to develop EFL university students’ functional writing performance and decrease their anxiety, the current study utilized a true experimental design to examine whether the use of SNS based on multimodal composing via Vlog is effective in improving EFL university learners’ functional writing performance. To assess the participants’ progress in functional writing performance, not only was a pretest-posttest design employed but also mixed-method research was used (Quantitative and Qualitative) to collect, analyze and integrate data. The pre and post-tests were administered to measure the effectiveness of the program, whereas the satisfaction questionnaire was used to collect the student’s feedback after the implementation of the program. To add validity and reliability to the findings.

Participants

The participants of this study were the freshers of the American University in Cairo who study English in the English Language Institute (ELI) before declaring their majors in the academic year 2022-2023. The

number of participants was thirty divided into two classes; 15 in each class where we met twice a week Sunday- Wednesday from 9:00 A.M to 11:45 A.M and from 12:00 P.M to 2:45 P.M with a 15-minute break in between in each session. It is a 30-hour synchronous program apart from the asynchronous time. All the participants had smart phones, and they had experience in video making with mobile phones. They were randomly selected as the experimental groups and the control groups.

Procedures

The intervention lasted for 6 weeks. All students' materials and assignments were the same for the two groups, but the only difference was that the experimental group used Vlogs to finish the first writing assignment and final homework piece. Figure 2 shows how the participants were presented with a Vlog product. The aims of the study were clearly explained, and all students consented to participate in it. All of the participants were supposed to write based on IM, while each participant in the experimental group took part in Vlog making.

The English writing pretest was then administered to the students. After the pretest, the students were divided randomly into two classes; one class as the control group and the other as an experimental group. The control group consisted of 15 freshmen and the experimental group consisted of 15 freshmen. Up to the beginning of the study, both groups had received the same course content respectively.

After the study, questionnaires (evaluated on 5-point Likert scale) about the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards vlogs and their anxiety towards the writing performance were assigned to them. In order to arouse students' Vlog-making and writing interests, NA tools were used to spot their linguistic needs, the topics they are interested in and their learning styles.

Data Collection Instrument

The test was used to measure the participants' proficiency in writing accurate and well-designed report, summary of a graph and a cover letter. Before the program, a pretest was administered to collect data about the students' baseline status particularly in writing the above-mentioned genres. The test has three fresh starts to give the students an opportunity to show their potential in writing. In addition, the questions were contextualized so that students did not waste their time thinking of ideas, but they made good use of their time to express their abilities in writing. At the end of the program, a post-test was administered to measure the effectiveness of the program on the students' writing performance on specific genres and the rate of anxiety connected to this skill. The test was about three topics;

- First, "Summarize the information in the bar chart by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant".
- Second, "write a report to your headmistress who asked you to conduct a survey about inviting a celebrity to give a speech to the students and a present to be introduced as a thank you gift for coming to the school".
- Third, look at the job advertisements on the website and choose one to apply for. Think about what experience and skills you have that you can highlight. Write your cover letter below.

Data Analysis

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there were any relevant pre-existing differences between the control and experimental groups in the three types of functional writing. The ANOVA results are presented in Table 4. For the total scores, the experimental groups in the summary of a graph and cover letter had somewhat higher

scores, while in a report had lower scores. In terms of readability, all the experimental groups had somewhat higher scores, which means that writings of experimental groups in the pretest were easier to read, and the same as that in lexical complexity. In the field of syntactic complexity, the first two genres gained a somewhat higher score. However, the results of ANOVA indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between control groups and experimental groups in the three genres in the pretest. Table 1

Genres	Experimental Group		Control Group		F	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Summary of a Graph						
Score	79.333	5.025	78.391	4.963	0.024	0.363
Readability	76.454	6.065	76.315	7.714	1.745	0.923
Lexical Complexity	0.759	0.059	0.755	0.069	0.629	0.744
Syntactic Complexity	20.780	15.632	25.753	26.786	3.636	0.290
Report						
Score	78.972	3.470	79.110	15.215	17.136	0.948
Readability	66.681	18.086	66.006	27.981	1.025	0.882
Lexical Complexity	0.789	0.063	0.747	0.131	1.427	0.039
Syntactic Complexity	32.439	44.292	32.205	34.303	0.195	0.994
Cover Letter						
Score	83.097	7.184	75.653	16.294	0.656	0.005
Readability	61.384	25.244	60.759	24.651	0.031	0.903
Lexical Complexity	0.769	0.052	0.749	0.170	4.165	0.452
Syntactic Complexity	24.850	19.209	24.886	28.66	0.094	0.994

Table 1

To answer the first research question, *t*-tests were performed on the data from both experimental and control groups of participants to determine whether the application of multimodal composing based on mobile SNS was effective in improving EFL learners' writing performance. The *t*-tests were performed separately for the control and experimental groups of three pairs. The results were shown in Table 2. Regarding the second research question, the gains in total scores, readability, lexical, and syntactic complexity from pretest to posttest were computed for both sides of three pairs, and ANOVA was performed to examine the intervention effect.

Lastly, for the third research question, pertaining to students' perceptions of and attitudes towards using multimodal composing based on vlog, content analysis of the responses from the experimental-group questionnaire was performed. RQ3 focused on learners who used multimodal composing in English writing, so the learners in control groups did not respond to the learning attitude questionnaire.

Analysis of Variance of Score Gains								
Comparison between Two Groups	Total Score		Readability		Lexical Complexity		Syntactic Complexity	
	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Summary of a Graph	1.002	0.023	0.393	0.080	2.447	0.240	39.833	0.019
Report	1.985	0.041	18.265	0.014	1.088	<0.001	8.662	0.077
Cover Letter	91.048	<0.001	11.063	0.084	7.575	0.019	35.844	<0.001

Table 2

Result

Descriptive Statistics

The control group's average total scores were all more than 75 (full score in 100) in the pretest, indicating that the participants had a grasp of basic writing skills that allowed them to finish the writing tasks. As for the readability, the average for the three genres were 76.315, 60.579 and 66.006 (out of 100) in the pretest, indicating that most participants in the control condition could not produce a more complicated text. For lexical complexity, the control group's average scores were 0.749, 0.747, and 0.755, indicating that they might not use more advanced vocabulary in writing. For syntactic complexity, the control group's average scores were 32.205, 24.886, and 25.735, indicating that they might not produce more complex sentences in a comprehensible way. Similar pretest patterns were observed for the experimental group. The experimental group of the three genres had average pretest scores of 79.333, 76.454, 0.759, and 20.780; 78.972, 66.681, 0.789, and 32.439; 83.097, 61.384, 0.769, and 24.850 in total scores, readability, lexical complexity, and syntactic complexity, respectively (See from figure 1

Progress

The participants' writing performance was assessed in four aspects: total scores, readability, lexical complexity, and syntactic complexity to make it easy to calculate the result. The writing tests of students were scored by two raters who had experience in rating writing according to the criteria of each type of functional writing so that the test reliability was maintained. Tables (3) presented the three types of functional writing. Readability refers to the ease with which a reader can understand a written text, which depends on its content (the complexity of its vocabulary and syntax) and its presentation. In this study, Flesch Reading Ease in Microsoft Office Word, the degree number of which ranges from 0 to 100 is used. The bigger the number is, the easier the text is.

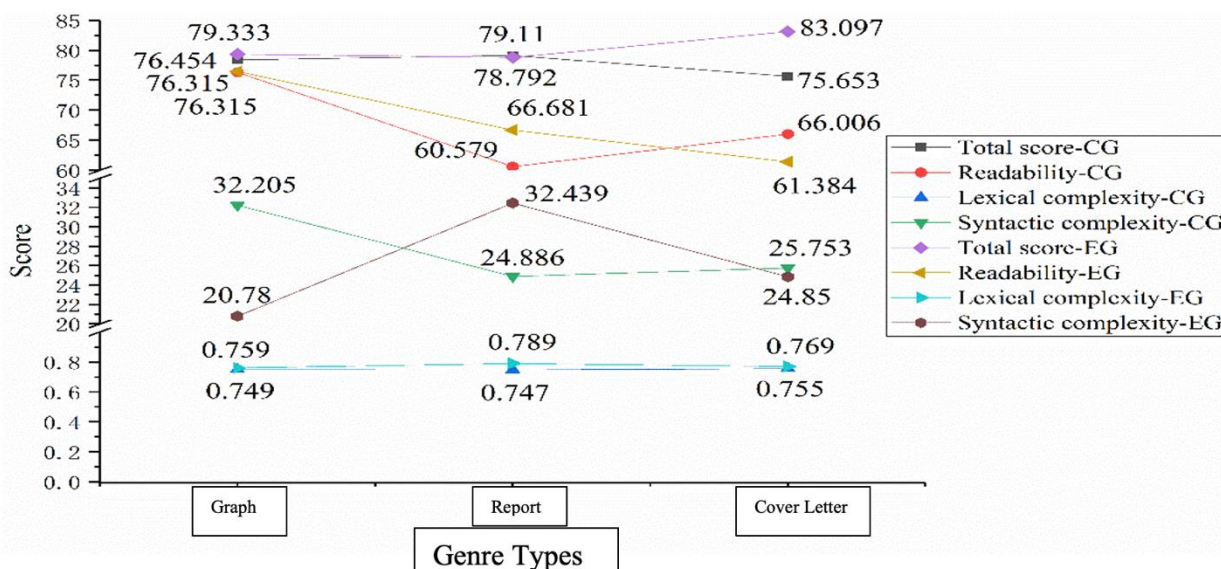


Figure 1. Descriptive statistics in pretest.

According to Lu, lexical complexity is operationalized as the range of a learners' vocabulary as displayed in language use. Lexical complexity was measured by LCA (Lexical Complexity Analyzer) using the index of LV (lexical variation).

Syntactic complexity was measured by L2SCA (L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer) using the index of MLS (Mean Length of Sentence). The higher the MLS is, the more complex the syntactic aspect was regarded.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of t-test results, pretest and posttest.						
Experimental Group			Control Group		<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Genres</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Summary of a Graph						
Control Group						
Score	78.391	4.963	80.034	4.232	-1.798	0.079
Readability	76.315	7.714	77.465	5.837	-0.922	0.361
Lexical Complexity	0.755	0.069	0.755	0.059	0.000	1.000
Syntactic Complexity	25.753	26.786	40.620	55.311	-1.807	0.078
Experimental Group						
Score	79.333	5.025	81.979	3.930	-3.298	0.002
Readability	76.454	6.056	75.416	5.363	1.056	0.297
Lexical Complexity	0.759	0.059	0.769	0.056	-1.035	0.306
Syntactic Complexity	20.780	15.632	21.312	9.332	-0.209	0.835
Report						
Control Group						
Score	79.11	15.215	83.44	5.261	-2.049	0.046
Readability	66.006	27.981	70.262	7.94	-1.042	0.303
Lexical Complexity	0.747	0.131	0.763	0.071	-0.920	0.362
Syntactic Complexity	32.205	34.303	28.633	22.303	0.629	0.532
Experimental Group						
Score	78.972	3.47	85.418	4.507	-8.938	<0.001
Readability	66.681	18.086	60.78	25.785	1.33	0.189
Lexical Complexity	0.789	0.063	0.826	0.569	-3.942	<0.001
Syntactic Complexity	32.439	44.292	22.588	10.967	1.799	0.078
Cover Letter						
Control Group						
Score	75.653	16.294	81.724	1.773	-2.073	0.010
Readability	60.759	24.651	96.496	7.346	-2.552	0.014
Lexical Complexity	0.749	0.170	0.724	0.116	0.949	0.348
Syntactic Complexity	24.886	28.66	17.996	4.52	1.744	0.087
Experimental Group						
Score	83.097	7.184	86.054	6.149	-3.157	0.003
Readability	61.384	25.244	63.652	22.048	-0.408	0.642
Lexical Complexity	0.769	0.052	0.767	0.434	0.224	0.824
Syntactic Complexity	24.850	19.209	32.532	24.451	-2.503	0.016

Table 3

As can be seen from the descriptive statistics in the summary of the graph, for the control group, it had higher scores, respectively, in total readability and syntactic complexity in the posttest than in the pretest; for the experimental group, it had higher scores in total lexical complexity and syntactic complexity. As can be seen from report, for the control group, it had higher scores in total readability and lexical complexity in the posttest than in the pretest; for the experimental group, it had higher scores in total and readability. As can be seen from the cover letter, for the control group, it had higher scores in total readability in the posttest than in the pretest; for the experimental group, it had higher scores in total readability and syntactic complexity. Conducting *t*-tests of each of these four aspects of

writing performance confirmed this observation. For summary graph writing, the control group did not improve significantly from pretest to posttest in total scores and other three aspects, because p values were all over 0.05; p values for the experimental group improved significantly from pretest to posttest only in total scores ($t = -3.298, p < 0.05$). For report writing, the control group improved significantly from pretest to posttest in total scores ($t = -2.049, p = 0.046$); the experimental group's improvement was significant in two areas: $t = -8.938, p < 0.001$ for total scores, $t = -3.942, p < 0.001$ for lexical complexity. For cover letter writing, the control group improved significantly from pretest to posttest in total scores ($t = -2.073, p = 0.010$); the experimental group's improvement was significant in two areas: $t = -3.157, p = 0.003$ for total scores, $t = -2.503, p = 0.016$ for syntactic complexity.

Intervention Effectiveness

In summary graph writing, the experimental group had slightly lower pretest scores in syntactic complexity and higher scores in readability (the higher the score of readability is, the easier the text is) than the control group did, but higher posttest scores in total scores and lexical complexity, and lower scores in readability. In terms of syntactic complexity, the control group gained 14.867 from pretest to post test, while the experimental gained 0.532. In report writing, the experimental gained slightly lower pretest scores in total scores and higher in readability than the control group did, but higher posttest scores in total scores and lexical complexity and lower in readability. In terms of syntactic complexity, the control group gained -3.572 from pretest to posttest, while the experimental group gained -9.851. In cover letter writing, the experimental group had slightly lower scores in syntactic complexity and higher in readability than the control group did, but higher posttest scores in total scores, lexical complexity and syntactic complexity, and lower in readability.

ANOVA was performed to determine if these gains were significantly different between two groups of three pairs, respectively (see Table 5). For summary graph writing, in the case of total scores ($F = 1.002, p = 0.023$) and syntactic complexity ($F = 39.833, p = 0.019$), a statistically significant difference was found, indicating that the experimental group made more progress than the control group in these two areas. For report writing, in the case of total scores ($F = 1.002, p = 0.023$), readability ($F = 18.265, p = 0.014$) and lexical complexity ($F = 1.088, p < 0.001$), a statistically significant difference was found, indicating that the experimental group made more progress than the control group in total scores and used more advanced vocabulary to produce more complex writing. For cover letter writing, in case of total scores ($F = 91.048, p < 0.001$), lexical complexity ($F = 7.575, p = 0.019$) and syntactic complexity ($F = 35.844, p < 0.001$), a statistically difference was found, indicating that the experimental group made more progress in functional writing performance and used more complex vocabulary and sentences in writing.

4.5 Attitude

Students' perception of and attitudes towards using vlogs were used to answer the third research question (Figure 2). In the questionnaire, questions can be divided into two categories: Q1 to Q9 demonstrated the advantages of s vlog's application to writing, while Q10 to Q13 stated several negative opinions. Using Cronbach's alpha, the questionnaire reflects high reliability ($r > 0.90$).

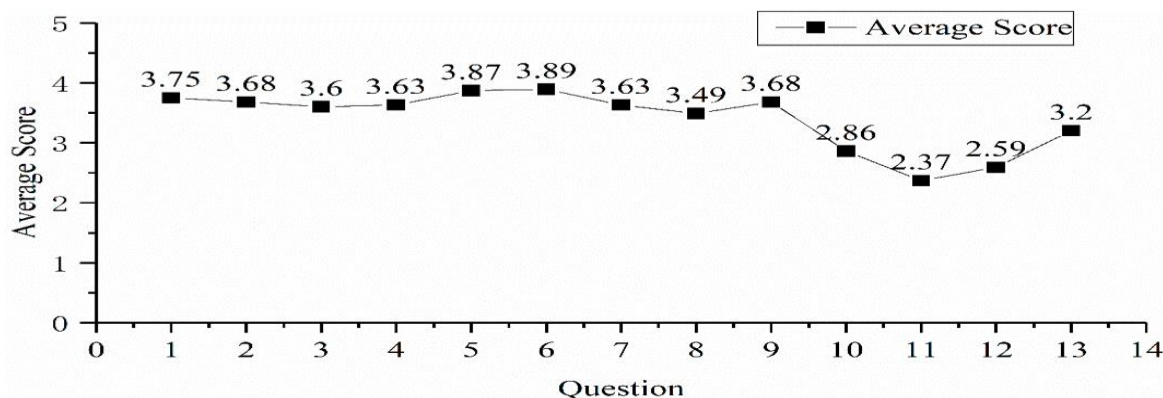


Figure 2. Average score of learners' responses in the questionnaire.

Advantages: participants identified two main features of vlog-based English writing that they found useful: being motivated and improving whole writing performance. The average score of Q1 to Q9 was above 3.00 (out of 5), indicating that the important role vlogs had played in writing improvement was acknowledged.

Negative opinions: The average score of Q10 to Q12 was below 3.00, revealing that some participants still hold uncertain attitudes towards the effect of vlogs brought to writing improvements. However, the average score of Q13 was slightly higher than 3.00, which may result from the pressure of participants' other learning tasks. Though vlogs were useful in writing improvement, they still required learners' time and energy.

As to the open-ended Q14, most learners suggested that vlogs should be recommended in writing class in general and functional writing in particular because of its usefulness. For example, "Using vlogs in writing class is interesting", "This is an interesting method that enhance writing practice". However, several learners thought it is time-consuming, among which one student wrote, "I need to spend much time thinking about how to make vlog attractive".

Discussion

The results of data analysis indicated that the control and experimental groups of three pairs all improved their English writing performance pertaining to total scores, while not all of them improved in all three other dimensions—readability, lexical complexity, and syntactic complexity.

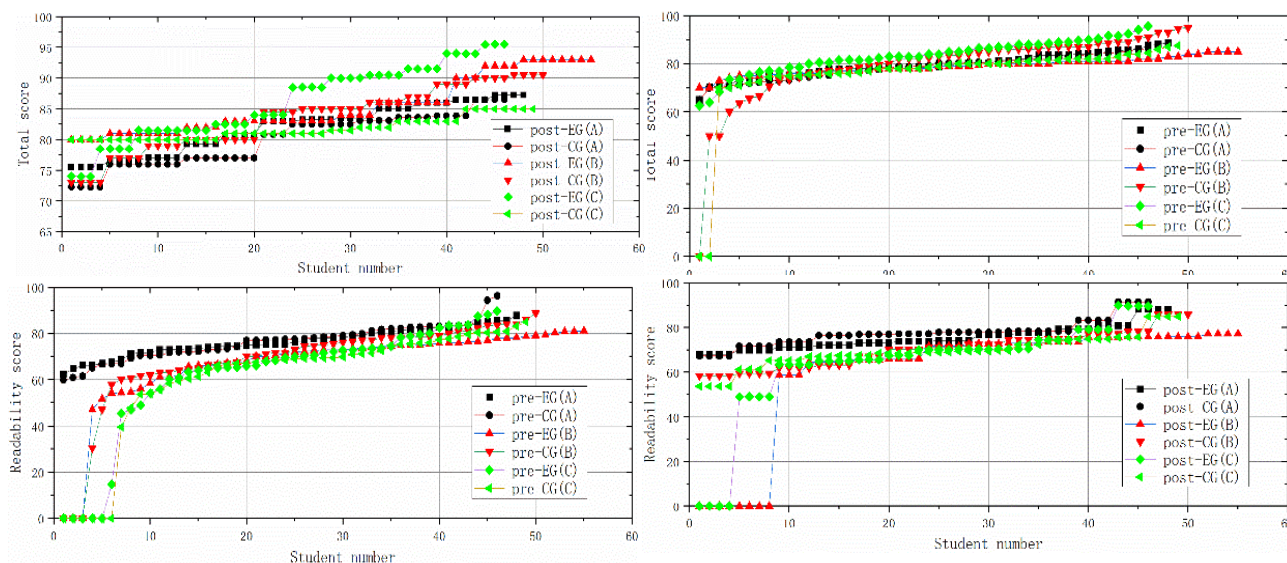


Figure 3. Comparison of pre-and posttests scores. (a) Comparison of pretest total scores. (b) Comparison of posttest total scores. (c) Comparison of pretest readability scores. (d) Comparison of posttest readability scores.

Overall Trend of Writing Performance

While using English for the expression of ideas used to be difficult, uncomfortable, and mundane, the convergence of multiple modes encouraged learners to practice their writing competence in a more meaningful way. The results of this experiment showed that, to a certain degree, the learners' functional writing performance had been improved. Except for the descriptive statistics in tables, the following figures also show the improvement. Both groups in the pretest gained similar scores, which showed little difference. From the posttest, the experimental groups had achieved better results than the control groups. For this aspect, similar results can be seen from Figure 3 a,b. In the pretest, functional writings of most participants, whether they were in experimental groups or control groups, had similar degree of readability. In the posttest, though the results were insignificant, the experimental groups obviously had lower scores in

readability, which means that some participants in experimental groups could product more difficult texts (see Figure 3 c,d).

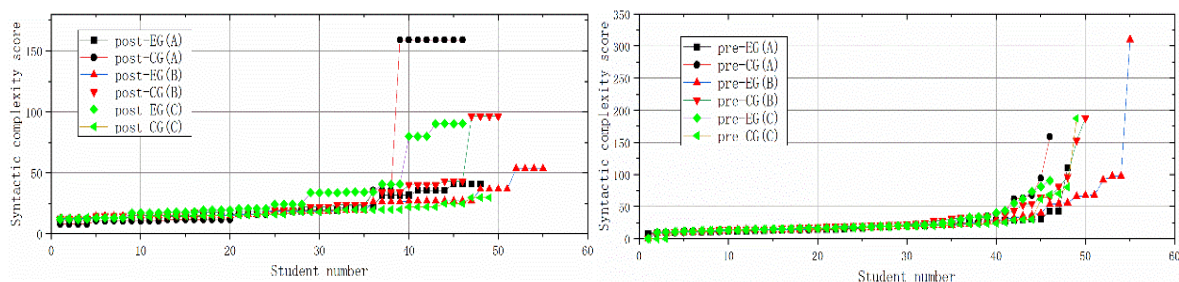


Figure 4. Comparison of pre-and posttests scores.
Comparison of pretest lexical complexity. (b) Comparison of posttest lexical complexity.

As to the lexical complexity, from the trend we can see that though the control groups and experimental groups had similar same trend in the pretest, the experimental groups' improvement was significant in this aspect (see Figure 4 a,b).

In the aspect of syntactic complexity, most participants of both groups in three pairs had similar scores, as we could hardly see any significant difference. While in the posttest, the experimental groups had significantly higher posttest scores in syntactic complexity than the control groups did (see Figure 5 a,b). The improvements in syntactic complexity can be shown in Figure 5 b.

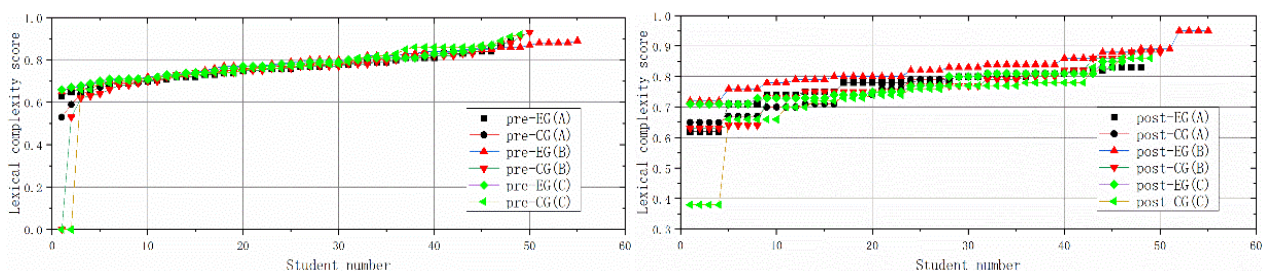


Figure 5. Comparison of pre-and posttests scores. (a) Comparison of pretest syntactic complexity. (b) Comparison of test syntactic complexity.

Affordances of Writing Competence Improvement

The improvement this study discerned can be attributed to four specific attributes of multimodal composing and mobile-based SNS use: visual

presentation activities, scaffolding for text writing, the fostering of an encouraging environment, and reduction in learning anxiety.

Firstly, multimodal composing represents connotation of viewing. As Anderson and Miyazoe stated that visualized activities could produce higher outcomes in the target skill such as writing when accompanied by a clear and appropriately challenging goal for online learning participation. Some of participants mentioned in the questionnaire that using vlogs to complete writing tasks was an interesting experience that stood out from their previous learning experience. It enabled them to practice their English writing skills under the help of visual activities, insofar as all the writing procedures were about visualizing. “Vocabulary with images or videos impressed me deeply, so I was willing to choose these in my writing.”, said one of the students. In addition, mobile access to vlog writing was promising for an increasing access to more writing opportunities. As such, the students could find suitable expressions and authentic materials for their writings, which could benefit the development of writing performance. Findings from the current study also echo those of a study by Ciekanski and Chanier who developed a multimodal communication to enhance the writing competence in an audio-graphic environment.

Secondly, making multimodal products provides a certain scaffold for later text writing. Scaffolding is a kind of assistance used to maintain effective learning (Sari, 2018). In traditional EFL writing teaching methods, the major shortcoming is that there was sometimes limited scaffolding, but the instructors often required students to write according to a given topic, which is a product-oriented method. Participants in this study, in contrast, could use vlogs to prepare formal text writing, and the whole procedure is process-oriented. In the process of multimodal composing, learners would search resources from the internet, where learners could find out native expressions that can be a bridge for later writing.

Thirdly, SNS created an environment that encouraged learners to have more interest in English writing. As instructors stated, multimodal composing developed learners' feeling of comfort, which made learning English a less painful experience and re-engaged learners with print-based writing. Prior studies of mobile SNS reported similar results. Jiang (2018), for example, found that in the process of digital multimodal composing, the student evolved from an exam-oriented writer and textbook-decoder to a multimodal designer, which could promote students' motivation in writing.

Lastly, multimodal composing and SNS-based writing practice reduced writing anxiety in the study. EFL learners are likely to experience shyness or anxiousness in communicating in English (Liu, 2008). In the present study, participants had the opportunity to pre-access related writing materials such as pictures and videos via vlogs as they desired, and group cooperation helped to incorporate members' ideas, so these appeared to have reduced the feelings of anxiousness and fear of nothing to write, not least because of full preparation and interest that vlogs encouraged compared with traditional paper-based writing. Gkonou et al. (2017) showed that language anxiety could affect the English skills of learners, as the anxiety increased and the quality of writing performance lowered. Thus, the participants' improved writing proficiency in total scores and lexical and syntactic complexity may represent indirect effects that their anxiety had lessened over the course of the experiment.

In addition to the affordances provided by multimodal composing and SNS, the research results in pre- and posttests revealed a positive change in writing proficiency for most of the participants, not all, though. Possible explanations for this could be summarized as follows. First, some students had a comparatively lower writing competence than others, which would confine their performance in this study, thus leading to insignificance in the improvement in writing competence. Second, according to the instructor's observation, some students had less opportunities to access to mobile devices in and out of class, which may lead to unfamiliarity with the use of vlogs, thus the significance of research results would be subtle. Third, the pressure from the college entrance examination would reduce the efficiency

of making a high-quality vlog, which would also weaken the effects that multimodal composing brought.

Implication of the Study

In this study, the program integrated with the process of writing collaboratively using multimodal composing via Vlog provides some pedagogical implications for the future. Safe classroom environment should be established via various techniques to guarantee effective learning process. Teachers should use innovative techniques where students are partners in designing and owning their learning through shifting to student-centered approach. Both teachers and students must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills, such as Information Literacy, Media Literacy and ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy.

Recommendations of the Study

In the light of this study, it is essential to make some recommendations to enhance EFL students' functional writing. Firstly, further study should consider recruiting elementary students, postgraduate students, and even adult learners to further investigate the effects of multimodal composing based on mobile SNS on EFL writing competence. Secondly, to verify the results, it might be useful to incorporate a broader range of data resources: for example, thinking aloud of the process of designing, interview on the instructors. Extending the duration of future experiments might help enhance the reliability of this research. Lastly, the effects of different teaching strategies and learning methods on writing performance based multimodal composing should also be investigated.

suggestions for Further Researchers

This study has offered some suggestions for the coming research. It is suggested that this study be replicated with larger samples. This study may be replicated to enhance other writing genres. This study may be replicated to improve other language systems and skills to go towards the whole language approach. The chat teaching study may be conducted to investigate the possible impact of chat on the retention of the features of the genres.

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