

Videos Essay and Podcast Video as Multimodal Writing Assignment: Indonesian EFL Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive research is conducted to investigate Indonesian EFL students' perspectives looking at multimodal writing through assignment. The students as the participants were grouped then given the options to choose between completing a video essay or creating a podcast video based on a different specific topic for each group. The data collection includes likert scale questionnaires, structured interviews, and written reflection to find out students' attitudes then analyzed through thematic analysis. The result reveals students' awareness of the use of more than one mode of communication, students' preference on challenging tasks, and students' complex comprehension on navigating difficulties. This research contributes to the body of knowledge and studies around multimodal writing within the context of Indonesian EFL students' perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

The process of learning a language requires comprehension of each element including the receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). It can be argued that teaching different skills requires different approaches and efforts. In terms of teaching writing for Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Students, in most cases what occurs during the process is about how to translate rather than how to write because the goals are set for creating mechanically less awkward and contextually understandable writing (Widiati & Cahyono, 2016).

Moreover, writing is often seen as one of the most challenging language skills to be mastered among others. Previous studies explored these concerns, (Ariyanti & Fitriana (2017), for example, found out at least four recognized challenges including grammar, cohesion & coherence, paragraph organization, diction, and vocabulary misspelling. Grammar was the most challenging while cohesion & coherence followed next in the second position. On the other hand, Hidayati (2018) did similar research with different focus to find challenges when teaching writing by investigating teachers' perceptions. The findings shows that, noticeable obstacles include the lack of linguistic competence, time allocation, and infrastructures to support the teaching writing process.

Multimodal writing can be seen as one of the alternatives for teaching writing. There are different varieties of discussions when it comes to defining multimodality. One definition is arguably supported by many states that multimodality is when something includes both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects for communication purposes. (Gravin, 2019, in Lim & Polio, 2020). Furthermore, Multimodal writing or multimodal text is defined as "texts that exceed the alphabetical and may include still and moving images, animators, color, words, music, and sound" (Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007, as cited in Gagich, 2023). In terms of multimodal assignment practices in Indonesia, "teachers have been teaching EFL through various modes of meaning-making aligning with The New London Group (1996), including visual using PowerPoint slides and images, auditory using music, or both through videos or YouTube videos" (Sutrisno, 2023). In other words, multimodality in Indonesia is widely known.

There have been many previous studies exploring the topic of multimodal writing in Indonesia. For example, an undergraduate thesis by Putri (2024) did a survey on multimodal composition in creative writing class and found the students are comfortable even though many admit they are not familiar with the concept. While a study from Novita et al (2024) focused on the teaching narrative text context reveals that multimodal texts are effective through improved scores comparison between pre-test and post-test. Another study conducted by Wahyuningrum (2024) through a doctoral dissertation focusing on high school teachers

However, all these studies mentioned with similar topics within Indonesian EFL context are still considered limited. Therefore, this current research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge of multimodal writing research. Furthermore, the focus on video making is different compared to selected previous studies mentioned earlier that are mostly on multimodal text.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Traditional Writing and Multimodal Writing

Multimodal writing is heavily situated in the theory of semiotic theory which argues that it is considered essential that those involved with multimodal writing possess comprehension related to switching different modes of communication (Kress, 2003, as cited in Tan, 2023). A research conducted by Tan (2023) looked at two groups working on different types of writing, one group aimed at creating a multimodal writing project, while the other group as comparison finishing a traditional writing project. The findings showed that the two different groups shared similar patterns in completing their works. However, these groups also showcased a non identical writing process, suggesting two different writing projects required different processes. Tan (2024) in another study found that the participants showed multiple ways of attaching the quotations on the completed multimodal writing projects.

Multimodal Writing Research Worldwide

One of the studies conducted with a worldwide context is from Ho (2024) particularly on opportunities and challenges of digital multimodal composing as pedagogy through semi-structured interviews with university students in Hong Kong. The findings show that students perceive multimodality to enable a more sense of control for completing the tasks freely and creatively. While at the same time, the freedom also suggests a more complex organization of ideas to be put into students' works.

Another most recent research is from Zhang & Peng (2025) looking at the EFL higher education focusing on teachers' perspectives in China about multimodal composing. The research reveals that teachers involved in the research perceive the integration of multimodal composing for the pedagogical purposes throughout one semester positively. Several noticeable concerns include how the multimodal composing is translated into teaching instructions; even though it is not that complicated but university support is necessary.

Multimodal Writing Research in Indonesia

A heavily related study with specific focus on exploring teachers' experiences when integrating multimodal composing was carried out by Wahyuningrum (2024) within the context of junior high school in Indonesia. The research questions center around teachers' perspectives on delivering the concept of multimodal composing and their overall reflections. While a study from Novita et al (2024) particularly explored students at junior high school being exposed to multimodal writing when learning about narrative text. The pre-test and post-test with treatment in between indicated that there has been a quite significant improvement to the research participants. In other words, the multimodal writing approach in the class specifically on the writing section has been proven to be helpful when it is integrated into pedagogical practices.

METHODOLOGY

This is qualitative descriptive research. The students involved in this study are 18 in total majoring in English education study program in one of universities located in North Maluku. All the participants were required to complete a multimodal project of either video essay or podcast video as assignment. They then were instructed to fill out the questionnaire, structured interviews, and then written reflection as the data collection method.

This current research is guided by three research questions (1) How do the students present their multimodal assignment (2) How are students' perceptions towards multimodal assignment and (3) How are the challenges experienced by the students when completing the multimodal assignment. The collected data then going through thematic analysis in order to find out the noticeable patterns to be grouped into the classification (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Students' Video Essay and Podcast Video (Observation)



Figure.1 Video Essay

It can be seen from several examples of video essays screenshots above that the students not only focus on the text to deliver the message but also provide the visuals that go along with the explanation. It is important to notice that the students are fully aware that in multimodal projects, unlike any other traditional assignment, they are somewhat encouraged to put more effort in combining multiple modes of communication in delivering their topic. It can also be observed that the students' choice of visuals related to someone giving an explanation indicating the role of someone explaining something. However, it is also observable that not all students perceive such teacher icon visuals as necessary, this is because some others may put a non-human visual to the video. It means the functions each visual holds is more flexible than fixed.

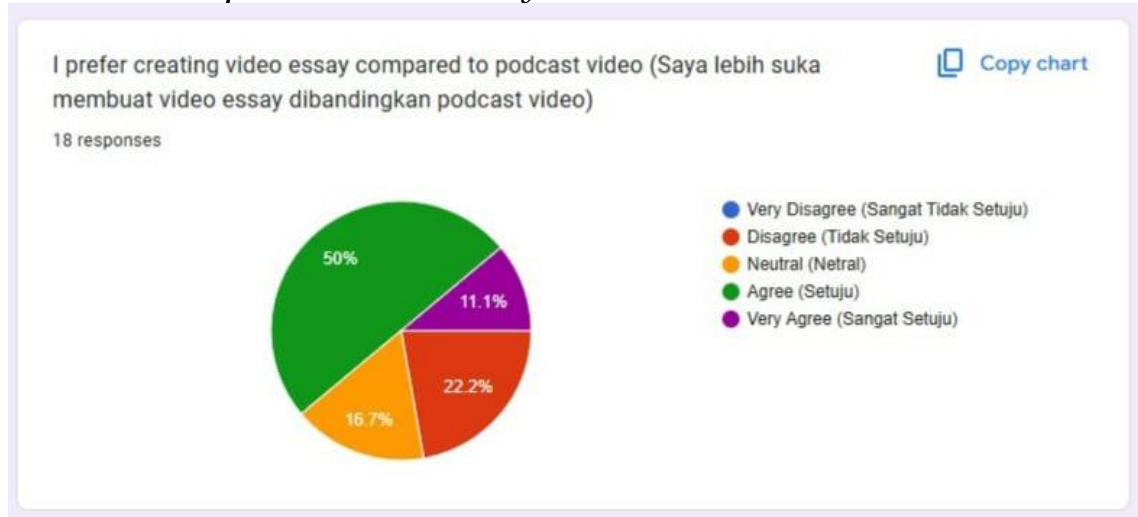
Podcast Video



Figure.2 Podcast Video

For the podcast videos, the students focus more on delivering the message without any additional editing. Some videos are presented vertically while the others are set horizontally or landscape. The reasons behind this difference preference might have something to do with how the students usually consume their podcast, whether vertically in which is most commonly found in social media videos or landscape that can be found in a longer videos platform like YouTube. Students are also observed to be using more casual expressions indicating their adaptability to podcasts as a less formal or academic setting.

Students' Perceptions on video Essay and Podcast Video



(Questionnaire: Preference on Video Essay and Podcast Video)
Figure 3. Video Essay

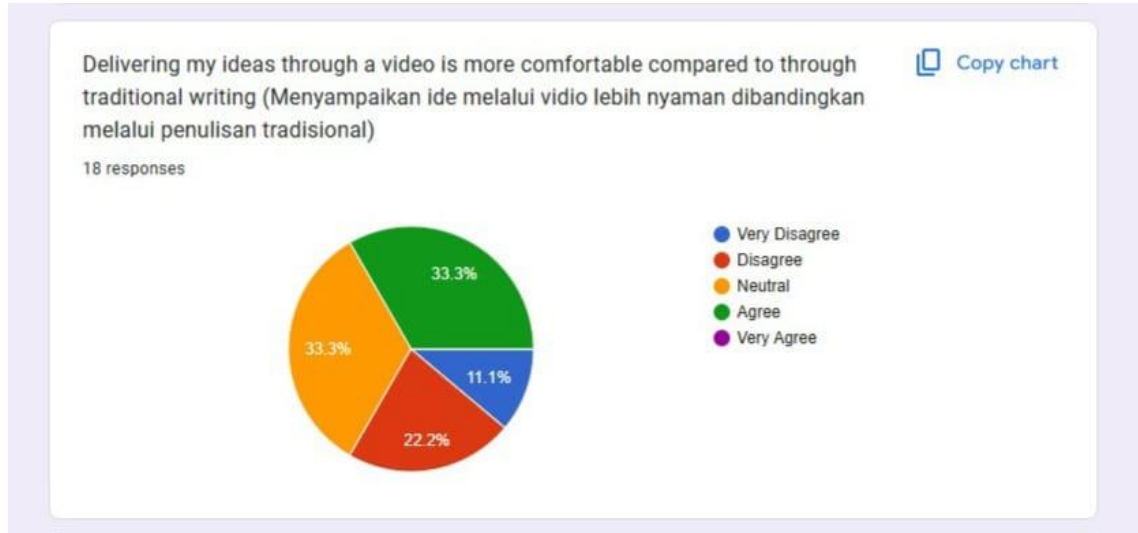
It can be seen from the result of the questionnaire that those who choose to answer agree and very agree collectively contribute more than half of participants who prefer making video essays compared to podcast video. It is also interesting to mention that those who perceive video essays as something preferable are half of the population. This information will be beneficial for looking at the results of the interview and written reflection later on in further sections. This information can be used to look at the consistency or inconsistency of the answers from the participants as a whole in general.

"I prefer video essays because of the freedom of creativity - we can play with music, footage, tone of voice, and editing style to convey the message in a unique and personal way." (Interview from Participant 6).

English translation: I prefer video essay because it allows creativity, we can incorporate music, footage, the tone of the sounds, and editing style to deliver the message to be more unique and personal.

It can be argued that students feel they have more options when faced with multimodal writing projects in a video form. It can also be inferred that such options are not available or can be found in non multimodal context. The answer from this participant also means that they are familiar with some expectation of presenting the message through many supporting elements to personalise the points they want other people to comprehend.

Podcast Video



Questionnaire: Preference on Video Essay and Podcast Video
Figure 4. Podcast Video

The result indicates that only a little more than quarter of the participants perceive that video as a medium to deliver their ideas as somewhat comfortable. It is important to highlight that a similar amount of answers share their views as neutral, it means they are not entirely sure whether to support or against the idea that delivering ideas through multimodality is preferred.

Moreover, the combination of those who disagree and very disagree shows another similar percentage. In other words, the participants are equally split into three different views (1) agree, (2) neutral and (3) disagree and very disagree. The result is unique and can be taken into considerations on how to dynamics the views from the students when encountered with such a question.

"I enjoy creating podcast videos more because I feel freer in expressing ideas through speaking. In a podcast, I can speak more casually and not too formally like in writing. I can also add intonation, emotion, and background music to make the content more engaging. I believe that speaking directly feels more natural and helps deliver emotions better than just writing. Besides, making a podcast helps me build confidence in speaking and becomes a fun experience since I can share my thoughts in my own style."

The answer from this participant is valuable to find out more about students' perception that what makes multimodality being favored is because of how it allows a casual approach in delivering ideas through speaking in podcasts. It also pinpoints the differences when speaking and writing are put together to be compared. This is because the answers suggest that writing is highly related to formal context while speaking is the complete opposite seen as less formal.

Students' Challenges on Video Essay and Podcast Video



Questionnaire: Challenges in Creating Video Essay
Figure 5. Video Script

A slightly more than half of the students as the participants in this study supported the statement that creating the video essay is considered a more challenging multimodal project compared to podcast video. The numbers look significant when looking at the total of those who disagree, only around ten percent of the total respondents, while participants who choose neutral or not agree nor disagree consisted of thirty percent out of the all the population.

“Creating video essays or video podcasts comes with several challenges that can be quite demanding. One of the main difficulties I face is managing the time-consuming process. From researching the topic thoroughly, writing a coherent and engaging script, to recording audio and video, each step requires significant effort and attention to detail.

Through the written reflection above it can be said that the amount of work needed to complete a video essay as a multimodal project involved many aspects. That is why students view video essays as something challenging, or at least arguably more challenging than podcast video as another option. One of the aspects being mentioned is the script in which related to writing the overall progression of the video being worked on. The respondent also specifically mentioned the concerns of creating the script that has specific emphasis on coherence and engagement. In other words, the participants possess not only the knowledge but also the awareness of how important a script is in a video because the good script will be translated into good video.

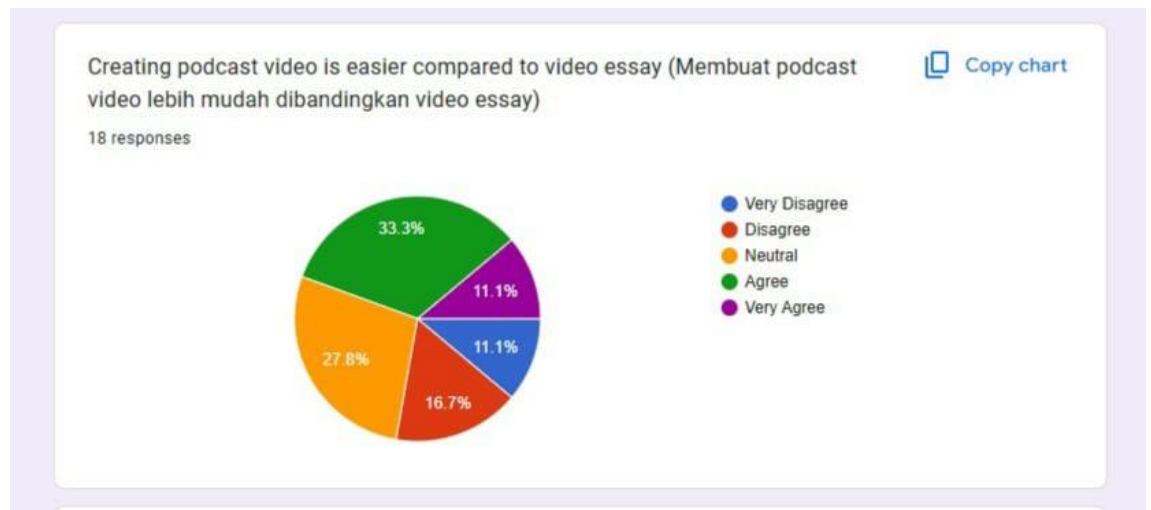


Figure 6. Video Editing

Based on the result of the questionnaire it can be seen that almost half of the participants agree that podcast video is easier to create compared to video essay. In addition to that, more than a quarter of the total participants cannot choose whether to agree or disagree. This is important to acknowledge how the perception of podcasts being considered an easier task and find out the reasons.

"The main challenge I faced when creating a video essay is about time management and writing the script that matches with the video duration. Sometimes, the idea is too long, so I should summarize it without losing the important meaning".

The pattern that can be found here is the importance of script writing and how it directly relates to the issue of managing time to some degree of difficulties. Editing in video is obviously one part in any multimodal project. Editing plays a crucial part in combining the multiple modes to be one complete form. As stated in the written reflection, one of the examples is on how to connect the script and video in terms of the duration. It is also necessary to consider many components such as the message and the meaning it brings, then those intended meanings can be translated and received by the viewers or audience

DISCUSSION

The result of this study on the students' perceptions aligning with Ho (2024) that students within this current shared similar sense of freedom in creating multimodal projects. This shows that they may not experience such flexibility when the assignment is based on traditional writing. Moreover, comparing with another Indonesian based previous study in particular, this current research findings also shared similar result with Putri (2024) that the participants are generally having challenging experience when exposed with multimodal assignment, however, they also showed excitement that can be seen through how they navigate the task with complex strategies and approach.

However, the findings contradict with Tan (2024) because students in this study did not consider ways of including citation within their multimodal project videos. One of the possible reasons might have something to do with their less developed academic awareness.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this current research highlight students interactions and experiences with multimodal writing through the completion of multimodal assignment including (1) students approach the multimodal assignment differently but also build and share collective understanding that they need to incorporate any modes of communication necessary (2) most of the students show preference on creating video essay compared to podcast video even though they also think (3) video essay is more challenging than podcast video because they need to do a lot of editing and scripting process.

Furthermore, recommendations for future related research are (1) explore more types of multimodal writing projects other than video essay and podcast video (2) investigate more about the reasons behind students' preference of different multimodal project and the use of multiple modes for the project (3) surveying university lecturers on their perceptions on multimodal assignment.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Still conducting further research to find out more about Essay Videos and Podcast Videos as Multimodal Writing Assignment: Indonesian EFL Students' Perspectives.

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