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Broadening Perspectives and Possibilities: Learners’ Pathways to Digital Multimodal Composition (DMC) in ESL Context

Adeel Khalid¹

Fauzia Janjua²

Abstract

This paper delves into the experiences of sixty undergraduate learners actively participating in distinct multimodal instructional units within their English as Second Language (ESL) writing curriculum. Drawing upon a qualitative approach encompassing learners’ written reflections, semi-structured designed interviews, and video observations, this research elucidates the principal themes that emerged from the learners’ perspectives related to the potential of Digital Multimodal Composition (DMC) in the ESL context. These themes encompassed the exceptional opportunities afforded by this approach, which included the capacity to conceptualize ideas through the incorporation of visuals and auditory elements, the ability to communicate in novel and inventive manners, the platform it provided for the authentic expression of personal identities, and its effectiveness in the contextualizing topic within their learning journey. Furthermore, this research highlights the primary challenges and constraints voiced by the learners, which encompassed a gamut of technical issues and the quest for the most suitable mode of expression within the multimodal framework. Leveraging these insights, the study culminates in a discussion of implications for both research and practice, particularly about integrating DMC in the multilingual classroom setting.

Keywords: Digital Multimodal Composition (DMC), Learner Perspectives, ESL Context, Social Semiotics.

¹ PhD Scholar, International Islamic University Islamabad

² Dean FLL, International Islamic University, Islamabad

Introduction

Writing has been one of the most critical yet essential aspects of a learner's academic success (Crosthwaite, 2016), and composition scholars have struggled with the thoughtful vicissitudes of technological advancement (Tan & Matsuda, 2020). In today's world, digital tools are available readily via tablets, laptops, and mobile phones, and learners regularly post on blogs and social network sites and enact as active producers rather than digital consumers. These devices have made it easy to access videos, sound, images, and other semiotic resources (Paker Beard, 2012; Palmeri, 2012). In this tech-savvy world, paper-based text engagement has been challenged, and this epistemological shift questions the logocentric view of what literacy does based on the notion that communication incorporates a variety of message and meaning delivery channels, making it necessarily multimodal (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006).

While significant progress has been achieved in comprehending the processes and outcomes of Digital Multimodal Composition (DMC) among learners in ESL context, it is worth noticing that many of these study findings tend to be presented through the lens of researchers or educators (Smith, 2018a). However, a complementary need exists to view learners' experiences in crafting digital products within an educational context from their vantage point. Such a perspective can provide invaluable insights into understanding the advantages and limitations of conveying meaning through various modes of expression.

This insight gleaned directly from learners is pivotal for effectively integrating DMC within the multilingual context, particularly in supporting academic learning. Learners' perspectives can enhance the scaffolding process for educators by shedding light on how learners conceptualise content, convey their thoughts, and incorporate their unique identities during the multimodal composition process. Moreover, this insight can empower educators to anticipate and address any challenges or obstacles that learners might encounter along the way.

In *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*, Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher (1999), the two pioneers in the field of composition and computers, argue that learners must be prepared for unique experiences in this digital world as the world is changing at a rapid pace, those experiences that we have never had. Kress, Hawisher, and Selfe (1999), along with the participants of The New London Group (1996), support the idea that literacy has evolved to comprise a digital aspect, including multimodal avenues of communication. Scholars and researchers have described and contended for establishing a niche for recent composing research on new media productions in the field of composition and computers.

This study, however, recognises the importance of digital writing by drawing inspiration from a study conducted by the American Life Project and Pew Internet that considered digital writing as one of the essential components that provide such an opportunity to expand learners' digital literacies using social media, and that helps in connecting learners to contexts beyond classroom spaces (Stewart, 2015, 2023). Such multimodal writing holds significant importance and has been acknowledged by experts in the field and scholars worldwide. Composition scholars worldwide

argue that a composition and rhetoric pedagogy based on the raising critical thinking and cultural cognisance of affordances in digital composition and constraints of diverse communication modes should be the cornerstone for academic success (Gonzales, 2018; Wyosocki et al., 2019).

The writing practices on digital platforms do not just include writing. However, these writings are also complemented with images, hashtags, videos, and emojis, and writing is executed with digital and print-based resources (Jewitt, 2013). Hence, these digital writings are 'multimodal texts produced using several digital modes such as images, videos, emojis, hashtags, audio, etc. (Bezemer & Kress, 2015). Research shows that digital resources largely influence the process of text designing (Skoufaki, 2009; Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). In producing multimodal written texts, it is important to study how learners construct their texts and what digital and modal resources they utilise in this process. As Yancey (2014) opines, the world has never witnessed such a moment when the technologies of writing have contributed significantly and rapidly to creating new genres and lay on the importance of writing for learners' academic progress. Yancy believes that 'we (composition scholars and instructors) have a moment' (p. 297), which refers to the composition scholars and instructors as the primary stakeholders and need to own these innovative writing genres and accept such canons of writing and composition at a broader intersection that learners can find relevance. Suppose the scholars propose to incorporate multimedia effectively into the writing curriculum of the university writing programs. In that case, it is imperative to understand and document the learners' challenges and how they respond to these multimodal composition challenges.

Scholars worldwide are researching and publishing digital writing and composition, evident from the ever-expanding dynamics of blog writings on digital spaces in the past decade, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital writing has emerged as a new field of exploration, and journals such as *Composition Forum*, *Computers and Composition*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Kairos*, *Composition Forum*, and *Journal of Digital Humanities* have published the significance of digital writing on blogs and websites.

In recent years, an expanding body of research has been conducted on creating fresh curricula to support the updated notion of literacy. The renowned pedagogical principles proposed by (Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures, 1996) the New London Group (1996) – Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice – have been used in course design in diverse contexts (Angay-Crowder et al., 2013). Further frameworks, like the multilateral curricular framework, focus on particular areas of multimodal literacy (Serafini, 2012), facilitating learners to understand visual imagery and the ideas used to create video composition projects (Miller, 2010). Several notable studies have explored and understood learners' and teachers' perceptions of multimodality, challenges, and pedagogical successes (Anderson, 2007; Choi & Yi, 2016; Ryu, 2016). However, most of these studies have concentrated on a single element of instruction, ignoring the dynamic interplay between many elements and the intersection of two critical stakeholders, i.e., learners and teachers. This study attempts to

take a step forward by examining learners' perceptions of multimodal writing and teachers as part of this learning practicum and how these multimodal practices purview their beliefs on multimodal. This study aims to add to the scholarship of writing and composition studies by understanding how learners respond to multimodal composition, what challenges they face, and how they respond to these challenges.

This study will help to germinate a new scholarly dimension toward teaching writing skills using multimodality. It has been stated in 'On Multimodality: A Manifesto' that a multimodal pedagogy is not merely additive; instead, it is a direction, it is a stance, and a benefitting of innovative modes of creating, composing, and understanding what is meant (Wysocki et al., 2019). It will inform the curriculum developers and designers to keep the role of digital literacies in mind, significantly when the present Government is investing in human capital to incorporate digital composition and develop digital literacy as a critical skill in the national curricula all across (British Council, 2015).

Lastly, this study will help spark a conversation about the makeup of digital media and can contribute to the growth of digital multiliteracy studies in Pakistan. Digital literacy in social and cultural research can be exemplified by the methodological framework created for this study. According to Eyman (2015), digital composition is a discipline that can be applied in various cultural contexts and has a flexible methodology despite its Western heritage.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical framework is informed by multiliteracy, multimodality, and sociocultural practices (Gee, 2015; Rowsell et al., 2013). This study is viewed from an interdisciplinary standpoint; therefore, multiliteracy derives definitions, concepts, methods, theories, and practices from other disciplines as per the study requirements. Informed by this approach, we designed this study to examine multimodal writing and how learners and teachers perceive these practices as a part of academic writing and discourse. Literacy is shaped by historical, cultural, social, ideological, and economic contexts beyond the instant position (Street, 2006). Digital literacy and technology are quintessential for teaching and learning, and this is how it comes into play for the present study. Literacy is multimodal because it involves artifacts that convey social meanings through various communication modes besides words, such as images, sounds, gestures, and more (Serafini, 2012). Keeping in view these aspects of multimodality and social semiotics that emphasise various modes in meaning-making (Kress, 2000, 2003, 2010) and meaning occurring through various ways, no single mode can communicate generative messages on its own, but the dense interplay between several modes and the innovative mode interweaving may (Jewitt, 2008). To express identities in ways that written texts typically do not allow (Cimasko & Shin, 2017; Hull & Nelson, 2005), to 'braid' home literacy practices with school practices to develop bilingual and multilingual narratives (Noguerón-Liu & Hogan, 2017), and to use cultural and social capital (Ajayi, 2009), it is crucial to orchestrate multiple modes.

According to research, ESL learners frequently display and communicate their preferences for various communication modalities (Smith, 2017). One learner may be able to describe their feelings graphically in a way that is impossible to do in writing. In contrast, another learner may rely on the language's specificity to get their point across. Several scholars have emphasised how ESL learners recognise that various modes have various communicative affordances, including sound, visuals, and movement (Ajayi, 2015; C. M. Ho et al., 2011; W. Y. J. Ho, 2022; Smith, 2017, 2018b). In this study, the researchers are interested in how learners identify the affordances and constraints of several modes for communicating their anticipated message and supporting their learning in an ESL classroom.

Literature Review

With the groundbreaking publications of Kress (2003, 2005) and the New London Group, the term "multimodality" made its way to the domain of rhetoric and composition studies (1996). The phrase "multiliteracies" was first used in this well-known manifesto, which defined it as the "growing plurality and integration of significant modes of meaning-making." (p. 64), But according to Kress (2003), "language and literacy now have to be understood as partial bearers of meaning only; language alone cannot provide us access to the meaning of the multimodally constructed communication." (p. 35). Therefore, multimodality refers to the 'use of different semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event' (Mills, 2015). Thus, new research in the field of composition has concentrated on how various modes are combined to actualise meaning-making and how various semiotic communication channels have been used in text production (Eisenlauer & Karatza, 2020; Jewitt, 2013).

Rhetoricians and writing instructors worldwide have witnessed a change in basic assumptions in teaching writing and revisiting their practices and pedagogies. The Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0) generated a heated debate during revisiting and problems with multimodality and multimodal composition (Dryer et al., 2014). The potential for improving learners' critical awareness of the different rhetorical, material, methodological, and technological decisions they would have to make as they navigate the increasingly multimodal communication both inside and outside academic institutions has been propagated by multimodal writing canons by various scholars (Wardle, 2014). Even though multimodal writing promotes the latest trends in rhetoric, literary practices, and pedagogical implications worldwide, writing in the Pakistani context has primarily been taught using traditional methods, especially in undergraduate writing programs. However, there has been a slight tilt towards teaching writing using digital applications and websites. However, it is unclear how teachers approach multimodality in their composition classes and how they transition to teaching it in first-year writing courses at university programs. In Pakistani context, DMC has not ventured into the domain of multimodality, documenting this transition from traditional writing to a multimodal composition and literacy within the field of writing and rhetoric. Composition researchers

worldwide are finding ways to incorporate multimodal writing into composition classes to develop and promote the required skills within an institutional framework, as writing is the fundamental skill that can help learners make an impact while presenting themselves in the job market.

This study contributes to filling a gap in the existing literature on the use of new media projects, how learners respond to these encounters in these challenging projects, their discernments of the advantages and disadvantages of DMC, and how their beliefs about multimodality are enacted in their classroom practices in undergraduate composition courses. Research and scholarship in writing have been explored from a theoretical and pedagogical point of view. Still, no study in Pakistan has studied the data from the perspectives of how learners create and compose alternate author paths using several digital platforms, how learners perceive their writing, and its connections to the traditional composition they studied during the undergraduate level. It will be beneficial for the discussion of multimodal composition and how learners perceive these multimodal composition practices that may help in playing a significant role in developing multiliteracy pedagogies that, according to researchers of the New London Group, are key to the 21ST Century instructional and educational demands (Cazden et al., 1996). The recent shift in this digital age can better understand what is indicative of this digital age through learners' prism trials and hindrances learners face, the importance they attach to multimodal composition, and looking into the ways that multimodal composition and traditional composition interact. This research hopes to contribute to specific digital literacy and understanding of how learners think and perceive producing novel types of writings and the rhetorical importance that learners assign to manuscripts with several modes within the framework of conventional composition classes.

The few studies that have specifically explored how ESL learners perceive DMC reveal that they have a positive view of using movement, visuals, sound, and text to communicate multifaceted ideas and express their identities (DeJaynes, 2015; Jiang & Luk, 2016; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010). However, these insights are often gathered in informal settings outside of school, and further research is required to understand ESL learners' perspectives and experiences with creating various digital projects for academic purposes within educational institutions (Omerbašić, 2015). To answer this need, we studied the viewpoints of 60 ESL learners who participated in three units of multimodal instruction in a writing class. Based on video observations, design interviews, and written reflections, it aims to highlight the primary themes derived from learners' viewpoints regarding the learning possibilities and obstacles associated with multimodal composing in a multilingual educational setting. This study will help to germinate a new scholarly dimension toward teaching writing skills using multimodality. It has been stated in 'On Multimodality: A Manifesto' that a multimodal pedagogy is not merely additive; instead, it is a direction, it is a stance, and a benefitting of innovative modes of creating, composing, and understanding what is meant (Wysocki et al., 2019). It will inform the curriculum developers and designers to keep the role of digital literacies in mind, significantly when the Government invests in human capital to

incorporate digital composition and develop digital literacy as a key skill in the national curricula (British Council, 2015).

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The following research objectives can be derived from this goal:

- To examine learners' multimodal writing practices and perceptions of multimodal composition, to enact ideas taught in a writing class as digital affordances,
- To document problems that arise when the learners are asked to compose outside the norm

Research Methodology

The methodology for this study is informed by the researchers within the field of multimodal composition as this study attempts to examine perceptions, challenges, and benefits in multimodal writing and how learner writers compare multimodal texts to traditional texts in their composition class. For such interdisciplinary research, Potter (2010) suggests that methodologies need to be revised and revisited for digital writing research and scholarship. It needs methodologies for multimodal writings (Zickuhr & Smith, 2007). Considering this as a guiding force, we designed this methodology as a mixed-method case study combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. A varied technique for composition research is produced by combining the quantitative data collected from traditional research methods with the qualitative elements of anecdotal narrative or evidence form, one that functions as a multimodal design that is necessary for the setting of a specific research issue rather than one that is either qualitative or quantitative (Johanek, 2000). The research took place in a private higher education institution centrally located in an urban setting that serves learners and helps prepare graduates for their practical lives.

Participants, Sampling, and Data Analysis

For this study, the researchers focused on undergraduate learners in their first year of composition classes, currently attending a research-based institution in Pakistan, as indicated in the report co-created by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and the British Council (Council & RAB, 2019). At this formative stage of this project, the selection criteria were measured, including a complete social network site's presence, proficiency, and willingness to use digital platforms effectively for writing. Participants recruited for this study were those who had taken compulsory courses in writing and communication in their first year of university life for academic preparation. We included a diverse body of learners in this study based on these

classroom observations of having different tendencies toward writing and selecting an equal number of both genders. This data collection phase concluded over one complete semester.

The researchers used qualitative methods to collect the required data from learners' reflection essays and their peer and group evaluations. Moreover, we also need to gauge the learners' computational aptitude and skills, their first-hand knowledge about multimedia software, and what and how they perceive completing a multimedia project in their WRCM (Writing and Communication) class at three principled stages of completing their multimodal assignment. Sixty learners took part in drafting their DMC projects, while for in-situ interviews, a total of 30 learners agreed to be part of these reflections and documented their experiences in completing a multimodal assignment task as a final project. Reflections answering various open-ended and focused group discussion prompts about the subjects, such as the advantages and limitations of interacting in diverse ways, how they used multimodal composition to analyse literature, and how they collaborated while writing.

Learners identified components of their work and justified particular design choices on their electronic devices, such as laptops, that captured both the screen and audio. Learners also talked about their opinions and experiences using DMC in a classroom as a whole. Finally, video observations were gathered for six small groups of learners for each of the three multimodal projects (n = 30). Additionally, each small group used a research laptop to record their in-class workshop composition choices using screen capture software. This program monitored their movements, visited websites, and altered and utilised media. The corresponding audio was also recorded during the composition process, offering insights into spoken exchanges. Every screen capture file that captured learners' compositional actions had a time-stamped video log created for it, including theme, image selection, design selection, image search, audio search, audio remix, collaboration, and voice recording.

Data Analysis

Three parts comprise the iterative process of qualitative data analysis of semi-structured interviews, learners' reflections and DMC tasks (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser et al., 1968). In Phase I, open coding was used to create emergent categories from each of the three learners' comments and interviews. In this stage, learners' various perspectives on their classroom experiences with DMC had to be identified, named, and categorised. During this phase, the researchers held regular meetings and refined emerging categories from learners' perspectives. Phase II concentrated on improving the codes we created and methodically creating connections between them. This stage required classifying and sub-classifying our open codes. Again, we held a discussion over evidence that contradicted these thematic categories and refined them across all data sources on learners' perspectives on their digital multimodal composing in an ESL setting. In phase III, we reviewed all the data sources (such as the interviews and reflections) to conduct selective coding. To observe if there were any samples of every code

found in the process data, we also looked through the screen capture video logs. This third emphasis aimed to confirm if our overarching categories were sufficiently abstracted to capture the learners' views on the variety of composers and digital projects. Using various sources and techniques, including triangulation, we aimed to increase the reliability of our findings (Erlandson, 1993). We also worked hard to put learners' perspectives front and centre so that we could see their experiences from their point of view.

Findings

Conceptualising Through Multiple Modes

In the early phases of their writing processes, learners stated how using pictures, music, and films assisted them in conceptualising literary topics. Meaning-making through non-linguistic modes frequently came before learners' written notes or additional textual components of their DMC projects, giving them a thematic basis for their analyses. Via visual conceptualisation, learners worked together to establish the analytical framework for their DMC projects. These procedures entailed using abstract terms (e.g., “culture” and “identity”) to search for images on the internet. After that, learners visually brainstormed by looking at and evaluating a number of the photographs that their searches turned up. These viewings stimulated discussions and links to the themes in the books they were studying. Many learners described how they used visuals as a starting point for their literary assessments. Before they started writing, several learners multimodally imagined ideas by watching videos or listening to music. Learners were also able to “see” the information through conceptualising through visual and auditory modes, which encouraged them to develop a sensory comprehension of the book. Several learners replied that they repeated this pattern of using multimodal composition to ‘visualise’ text. Learners described how engaging with the material in multiple forms forced them to think creatively and be less literal in their initial readings.

Ingenious Meaning-Making Through Multiple Modes

The learners described the ability to think in many ways as they expanded their options for communication. Many of them mentioned how they alleged a song or an image might better capture their thoughts than text alone, and they expressed how they flexibly used the distinctive affordances for various modalities to communicate meaning effectively. One learner noted in her reflection the following:

I felt like my creative side was being challenged because of that, and I had to win over that challenge.

Such reflections indicate how learners’ creativity was challenged and how allowing them to use multiple modes helped them think out of the box in their available options for communication. They detailed how they leveraged digital affordances of multiple modes to express meaning ingeniously.

With a wide range of communicative palettes to express themselves, the learners frequently expressed particular modal preferences (Smith, 2018) when creating and drafting their DMC projects. Throughout the last reflections, most learners outlined their preference for multimodal projects over regular written essays. In responses like these, learners' reasons for favouring DMC composing ranged from having more creativity, agency, novelty, and flexibility in conveying thoughts.

Contextualising Literature Through Multiple Modes

Learners interpreted the historical and social background of the work they were analysing by navigating networks of hyperlinked multimedia and educational websites. Many learners described how using multimedia to contextualise helped them comprehend the book, relate to the author, and make connections between the past and present. When writing on their laptops, the learners consulted online multimedia resources to offer insights into the material they had just finished analysing. Reading informative websites, watching relevant films, looking at old photos, and listening to music from the period were all examples of contextualisation. One of the learners expressed his thoughts, as shown in the following excerpt.

This project made us learn about videography, graphics, editing, and research. It allowed us to explore the teaching world and implement what we learned in other projects and our daily lives. It was an amazing experience working with everyone and learning new things.

Learners gained insight into writers' lifestyles and writing requirements by contextualising while they worked on their multimodal compositions. Learners also mentioned using their digital work as a platform to communicate what they learned.

Expression of Self Using Various Modes

Many learners could meaningfully express their multicultural and multilingual identities through communicating in various ways. The learners discussed how they succeeded in relating the ESL material to their personal feelings, multicultural experiences, and extracurricular pursuits such as out-of-school interests. How learners incorporated elements of their own identities through the orchestration of various modalities ran through all learner viewpoints. The ability to express their uniqueness and incorporate themselves into their DMC projects by choosing personally significant sounds and visuals, such as cultural songs, cultural artifacts, traditions, images of food or locations, and the use of linguistic heritage. Learners also discussed how using sounds and pictures helped them establish a solid connection to the ESL material.

Poverty in Pakistan

POVERTY IN PAKISTAN

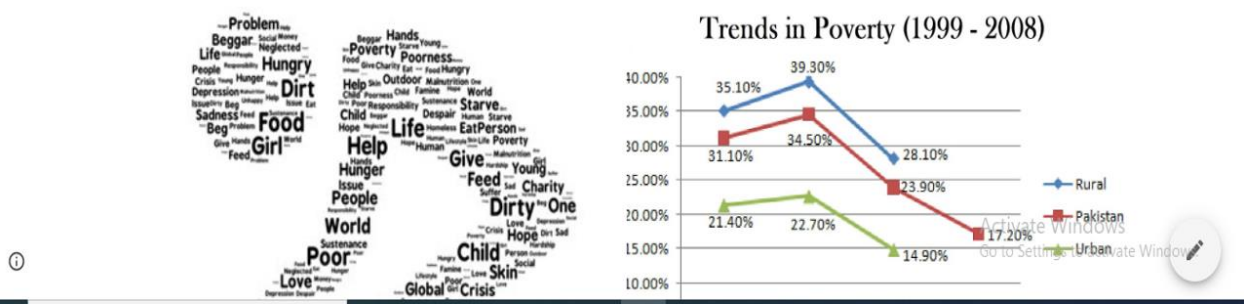


Fig. 1.1 Learner’s DMC Project that combined graph indicating statistics, text and image

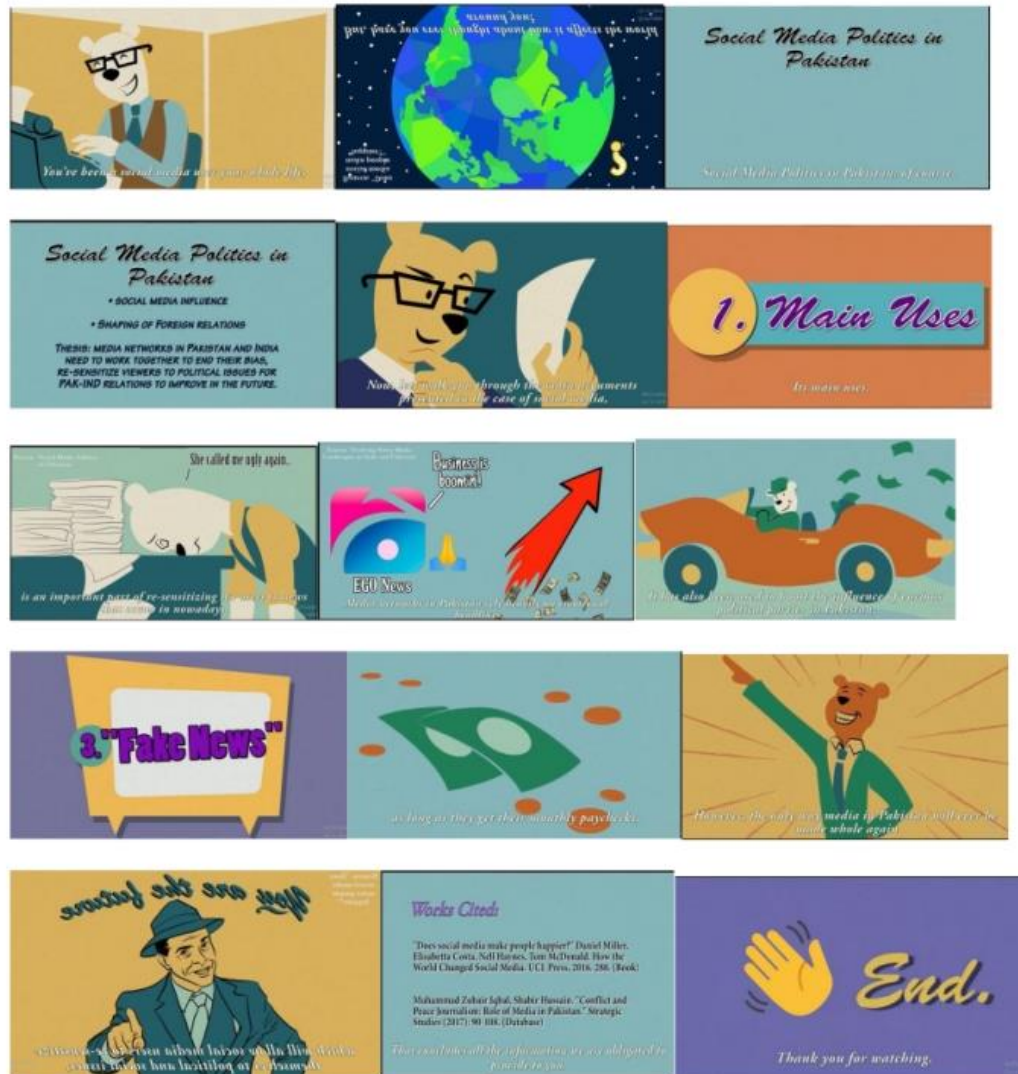


Fig 1.2 Learner's DMC Project that combines multiple modes, i.e., text, sound, video, illustrations and colours

Last but not least, learners depicted facets of interesting usage of multimodal aspects. One of the learners noted the following.

That project woke me up and trembled my soul.... While researching and reading about the struggles of children, it made me grateful and sad at the same time. It made me regain my voice so that I could become the voice for the unheard child labourers.

Constraints with Integration of Digital Multimodal Composition in ESL Context

Learners discussed the advantages of multimodal composition while also outlining the drawbacks they ran upon. The most frequent problem they encountered while writing was a variety of technical problems. Many learners claimed they had trouble merging material, using hyperlinks,

and using other editing tools in a few of the composing software (such as PowerPoint, iMovie, and Audacity). One learner noted the following.

As much software requires money, therefore, it wasn't easy to select the perfect software for the video. For this project, I worked alone, but one of my friends helped me access the software I wanted to use.

Learners described how they frequently had to seek assistance from the teacher and their peers as a result of these technological difficulties. One of the learners, Shimya, noted the following:

As for the Multimodal assignment, it has been useful but extremely difficult due to the time limit and lack of the right skills that would have been useful in efficiently conducting the task. Instead, the task could have been broken down into pieces and worked on in parts together with proper lessons on editing and other skills as many are not computer science majors, but those types of lessons would help in improving our editing skills and learning to use different software.

Another learner added the following.

This was my first time making a video and I had no prior knowledge about editing software, but I was able to do some research and find a program that I felt comfortable using.

The second most frequent limitation on multimodal composition mentioned by learners involved choosing the ideal way to express their thoughts. Other constraints centred around learners feeling they had less time to complete their DMC tasks, particularly if they did not need access to a laptop or internet connectivity issue; in addition to discussing the affordances of DMC composing, learners also described the constraints they confronted. The frequent constraints they experienced during their writing processes were different technical problems. Numerous learners reported experiencing problems with some composing applications and software. Learners described how they frequently had to seek assistance from the teacher and their peers as a result of these technological difficulties. The second most frequent limitation on multimodal composition mentioned by learners involved choosing the ideal way to express their thoughts. Some learners claimed that since they were more familiar with the demands of the academic writing genre, they would have opted to type their projects.

Discussion and Future Implications

This paper examined the perspectives of 60 ESL undergraduate learners who designed DMC projects in their writing and communication classes. Analysis shows how learners strongly examined the affordances of multimodal composition, as well as certain typical limitations when they were told to communicate using a variety of modes. These findings indicate and complement existing digital literacy studies on ESL research while also highlighting the need to elicit learners' perspectives and assist learners in composing and designing processes while drafting digital texts. The learners' view that multimodal composing has been afforded valuable and significant

prospects to voice their ESL identities and interests echoes within the preceding studies (Smith et al., 2021; Yi et al., 2020). DMC provides a variety of avenues of entrance and significant chances for ESL learners to relate to their experiences and the world while simultaneously pursuing academic objectives (Cummins et al., 2015; Smith, 2018b). Additionally, the learners stated their inclination for DMC over traditional academic writing corresponds with earlier studies showing that ESL learners who have greater flexibility, agency, and originality in their concept expression are more interested, motivated, and attached to their DMC projects (Goulah, 2020; Jiang & Luk, 2016). Through their multimodal projects, ESL learners realised that they could interact with academic material creatively, another insight offered by this study. Learners highlighted how learners developed a distinct sensory and emotive grasp of the content and how they conceptualised literary ideas through sounds and images. By combining several forms, learners were able to recognise the historical and cultural context of the topic they were studying on numerous levels. These results highlight the prospective for multimodal composition to mediate learning across several subject areas (Grapin & Llosa, 2020; Smith, 2017; Vandommele et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2014). This study also sheds light on how ESL learners used their multimodal projects to interact with academic material in novel and creative ways. In addition to developing a distinct sensory and affective grasp of the subject matter, learners discussed how they imagined literary ideas through images and sounds. Learners understood their studied topics' cultural and historical background by layering several styles and forming multilevel connections. The implications of these findings extend to the incorporation of multimodal composing in ESL classrooms. Learners expressed various challenges when it came to multimodal composition, including technical issues, bringing their group projects together, and finding the proper mode to convey their ideas as illustrated effectively. A few brilliant learners, especially those who outshone at writing, were initially bewildered when asked to express their ideas using texts, themes, colours, visuals, sound, and movement. Despite using a scaffolded workshop style, the classes included prospects for learners to analyse a range of instances, accept and offer peer review, clear writing and technical instructions, deliberations on their written manuscripts while working together, and follow their modal preferences in addition to explicit technical training, some learners nevertheless faced several constraints (Dalton, 2012, 2014). It also brings forth another challenge of teaching training programs to equip them with the growing technological advancements. In an ever-increasing number of ESL learners (Kohnke et al., 2021), research focuses on figuring out what obstacles stand in the way of using technology in the classroom and how teachers can work together productively with learners who have diverse backgrounds and language skills (Ajayi, 2009; Angay-Crowder et al., 2013). Additionally, instructors must consider the unique affordances and limitations that various modalities and digital tools give ESL learners in meaning-making. Lastly, our findings highlight the significance of recognising the voices of ESL learners, who are frequently silenced. Despite being the primary beneficiaries of curriculum innovations such as multimodal composition, learners are often disregarded as educational

stakeholders. Therefore, researchers and educators need to put ESL learners' experiences at the forefront and centre by hearing their viewpoints and drawing lessons from their experiences. The study will help language teachers and instructors reflect on their existing writing pedagogies and incorporate digital tools in their composition classes. This impact will directly benefit the learners in the English language classes. Moreover, the study will benefit the scholarship in digital humanities and interdisciplinary research as it aims to offer insights and conversations on various digital platforms and explore the benefits of such writings in an ESL composition class. It is hoped this research opens up new avenues for academic writing teachers and teaching composition and writing and inspires future research in this area.

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