



OPEN WORDS: ACCESS AND ENGLISH STUDIES

Vol. 15, No. 1 (2023): 44–63.

DOI: 10.37514/OPW-J.2023.15.1.03

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online)

<https://wac.colostate.edu/openwords/>

“How Can I Sound Politician?”: A Case Study of Multilingual Writer Transferring Prior Knowledge in Multimodal Composing

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ABSTRACT

This case study investigates how a multilingual student transferred prior knowledge to produce a video proposal and how the multimodal project could open up access to learning and reflection. Existing studies on writing transfer focus on how multilingual students draw on, reshape, and adapt knowledge across text-based writing contexts (e.g., DePalma & Ringer, 2011; Wilson & Soblo, 2020). With the growing interest in multimodal writing, there is a need to examine the transfer of knowledge across the boundary of modes and media. This study, therefore, intends to bridge the research gap by analyzing the multimodal writing process of an Arabic-English speaker in a first-year composition course. Data consists of screen-recordings with think-aloud protocol, a semi-structured interview, writing assignments submitted by the participant, and class observation notes. The findings suggest that the participant mobilized procedural, genre, and rhetorical knowledge at different stages of the project. The participant integrated the multimodal composing experience with his knowledge schema to form a more sophisticated and richer understanding of writing, although he also reported confusion. In light of the findings, three design features of the multimodal project are discussed to account for the positive observations.

Keywords: transfer, multimodal writing, multilingual writer, prior knowledge

Introduction

In recent decades, transfer of learning has received growing attention in the field of composition studies and second language (L2) writing (DePalma & Ringer, 2011; Robertson et al., 2012; Yancey et al., 2018; Yancey et al., 2014; Wilson & Soblo, 2020). Underlying such an increased interest is the assumption that writing pedagogy should equip students with the knowledge and skills that can be applied to various writing

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situations (DePalma & Ringer, 2011). Motivated by this ultimate goal in writing education, scholars have sought to understand and theorize how students transform and reshape writing knowledge when they move from one context to another, in the hope of designing teaching practices that effectively facilitate writing transfer (DePalma & Ringer, 2011; Yancey et al., 2018).

Most of the existing research on transfer is conducted in the context of traditional text-based writing. However, today's communicative landscape, both inside and outside of school, is increasingly featured by the use of multiple modes (Yi et al., 2020). In response to this change, writing scholars proposed the pedagogy of multimodal composition that allows students to take advantage of "the full panoply of color and sound, still and moving images available" (Belcher, 2017, p. 81). One of the central arguments for multimodal composition is that the use of various semiotic resources helps bridge the literacy practices taking place in and outside of school, so that school assignments do not seem irrelevant to students' daily lives (Selfe & Selfe, 2008). However, only a handful of studies have investigated how multilingual students make such connections by drawing on their prior knowledge in multimodal composing (DePalma, 2015; Kang, 2022; Shepherd, 2018). This study intends to fill the research gap by exploring a multilingual student's use of prior knowledge during a five-week video project. The study contributes to the literature on learning transfer in a multimodal context; it also seeks to discuss how multimodal composing can be configured to provide more access to learning for multilingual students.

Literature Review

Using Prior Knowledge in Multilingual Writing

Learning transfer has been defined in different ways with slight variations in focus (DePalma & Ringer, 2011; Haskell, 2000; Yancey et al., 2018). Adopting a broad view toward transfer, this study draws on Haskell's (2000) definition that sees transfer as "how past or current learning is applied or adapted to similar or novel situations" (p. 23). In this process, prior knowledge plays a critical role, as it serves as the foundation for learning transfer. Previous studies have documented and theorized the ways in which students make use of prior knowledge (Robertson et al., 2012; Wilson & Soblo, 2020; Yancey et al., 2014). For example, Yancey et al. (2014) analyzed college students' experience with first-year composition (FYC) courses and identified three ways of using prior knowledge: assemblage, remix, and critical incident. Assemblage involves "grafting isolated bits of new knowledge onto a continuing schema of old knowledge"

(Yancey et al., 2014, p. 112), which oftentimes fails to generate a working schema compatible with both new and old knowledge. Remix, on the other hand, integrates “the new knowledge into the schema of old ones” (Yancey et al., 2014, p. 112), usually in a more holistic and organic way. Lastly, the critical incident could come in the form of unpleasant failures, but in the face of such failing moments, students take the opportunity to rethink writing and ultimately arrive at some sort of conceptual breakthrough (Yancey et al., 2014).

The transfer of prior knowledge not only takes place across rhetorical contexts, but also across languages and even media (DePalma, 2015; Kang, 2022; Wilson & Soblo, 2020). Wilson and Soblo’s study (2020) of multilingual students enrolled in a FYC course demonstrates that the participants acted as “brokers” who “synthesize previously learned rhetorical strategies with those introduced alongside new genre tasks” (p. 6). The brokering was purposefully enacted, often with the consideration of potential audience in mind (Wilson & Soblo, 2020). Investigating how knowledge is transferred across genres and media, DePalma (2015) and Kang (2022) noted that the L2 students mobilized the genre and rhetorical knowledge that they have developed inside and outside of the academic context. Two participants in Kang’s study (2022) even drew on their prior knowledge of multimedia communication to help with print-based writing. These studies provide valuable insights into the dynamic writing process experienced by multilingual students when they venture into a new task and rhetorical situation. These studies also invite writing teachers and scholars to consider what aspects of course design could better encourage the effective and innovative use of prior knowledge.

Access to Learning through Multimodal Writing

Historically, writing has been viewed as a set of discrete and decontextualized skills that students learn to master. For example, the controlled composition approach, inspired by the behavioral theory of learning, aimed at helping students construct correct sentences with minimum mistakes (Matsuda, 2003). This understanding of writing, along with the pedagogical methods that stem from it, has been proven ineffective or even hindering to writing development when learners are unfamiliar with the anticipated behaviors (Curry, 2003). For example, Curry’s ethnographic study (2003) on a non-native English speaker suggests that the discrepancy between the student’s pre-existing literacy practices and the academic conventions could lead to frustration. In light of the findings, Curry (2003) proposed that the writing curriculum

should allow room for students' diverse life experiences, so that "a course between 'reformulation' and 'challenge' can be navigated" (p. 15).

In recent years, writing scholars have explored how multimodal composition could be leveraged to provide multilingual students with access to various identities, literacy practices, and knowledge (Balzotti, 2016; Hafner, 2015, Jiang, 2018; Jiang et al., 2020). Multimodal composition concerns the strategic use of semiotic resources in constructing texts that meet social, cultural, and discursal expectations (Kress, 2003). Through the "remix" of different semiotic resources, multilingual writers could develop a wider range of authorial voices that are not usually supported by traditional writing assignments (Hafner, 2015). During this process, some students repositioned themselves from passive test-takers to agentive multimodal designers (Jiang, 2018). In a longitudinal case study reported by Jiang et al. (2020), an ethnic minority student named Tashi, who took an EFL class with other mainstream Chinese students, created four videos about Tibetan culture. The fact that Tashi could include narration, sound, and image to present her heritage culture has positioned her as a knowledgeable individual with unique cultural insights, which eventually led to boosted confidence in English learning (Jiang et al., 2020). Employing storyboard as an innovative teaching pedagogy, Balzotti (2016) finds that explicit instructions on knowledge transfer across modes help basic writers internalize rhetorical concepts and develop a sophisticated understanding about writing.

The previous research (Hafner, 2015; Jiang et al., 2020) has shown that encouraging multilingual students to draw on their prior knowledge not only facilitates writing transfer across contexts, but also grants them access to more learning opportunities. Multimodal writing tasks, when designed properly, could create such a space for students to make connections between old and new experiences (Kang, 2022). Building on the literature, this study intends to explore how an Arabic-English speaking student makes use of prior knowledge throughout a five-week FYC project. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following three research questions:

- (1) What prior knowledge was mobilized by the focal participant in completing the video project?
- (2) How did the focal student transfer his prior knowledge in completing the video project?
- (3) How does the design of the multimodal project open up access to learning for the focal student?

Method

Research Context and the Participant

This case study was conducted at Arizona State University (ASU) in the United States. The FYC courses at this institution embrace the learning outcomes of enhancing students' critical thinking, rhetorical knowledge, and knowledge about writing process. The ASU Writing Program provides FYC courses designed specifically for multilingual, international students (ENG 107 and ENG 108), along with the mainstream FYC courses for domestic students (ENG 101 and ENG 102). The instructors of ENG 107 and ENG 108 receive at least one practicum that focuses on teaching second language writing. This study took place in an ENG 107 section, which is the first of the two-sequence FYC course.

The focal participant, Hassan (pseudonym), was identified through purposive sampling. Hassan is a 21-year-old male student from Saudi Arabia, who speaks Arabic as his first language. Before coming to the United States, Hassan received his education at an international school in his home country, which has prepared him for learning in an English-speaking country. Hassan reported that he likes reading and writing and that he has had quite a lot of experience with Arabic writing in the academic context. However, writing in English is difficult for Hassan, and it is mostly restricted to writing rigidly structured papers for standardized exams. In addition to writing experiences, Hassan also labeled himself as “a very deep thinker” (interview) who often contemplates philosophical issues. Majoring in psychology, Hassan has shown considerable interest in the current study and agreed to participate with enthusiasm.

The Multimodal Project Overview

The multimodal project was designed as part of a dissertation study that investigates students' multimodal composing processes. It was placed as the second project of the semester and lasted five weeks. For this project, students were expected to produce a three-to-five-minute video, in which they analyze a sustainability issue on campus and propose solutions to solve the problem. Several assignments were built into the project to scaffold video creation. On the first day, students watched Vox videos on the topic of sustainability and analyzed the genre of video proposal using a worksheet. In the following class sessions, students brainstormed ideas, proposed plans, conducted online searches, and documented their readings through an annotated bibliography. The instructor also gave mini-lectures on rhetoric-related concepts, such as ethos,

logos, and pathos. Then, students composed a storyboard (Table 1) as the first step of video-making. Before creating the first cut of the video, students received feedback on their storyboard, learned the basics of video-editing, and discussed how different semiotics afford argument-making. Throughout the project, the instructor provided timely assistance, and students had sufficient opportunity to work in class and interact with each other. The last assignment of the project was a written reflection that asked students to explore how their understanding about writing has changed over time.

Scene	Timeline (estimated)	Visual clues	Text on screen	Oral narration
1	0.01-0.08	Close displays of delicious food	-	I have to admit that when it comes to food, I'm a total sucker. Whether it's sugar or grease or carbs, pretty much bring it on!

Table 1. An example of a storyboard adapted from Kim and Belcher (2020)

Data Collection

This qualitative case study focuses on a focal student's writing process and intends to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as it plays out in a naturalistic setting (Casanave, 2010). Purposive sampling was used to identify the potential participant, since this sampling method ensures fruitful results by matching the sample to the research objectives (Campbell et al., 2020). Hassan was chosen as the focal participant not only because he is highly motivated and engaged, but also because he has demonstrated, from time to time, confusion and struggles that are valuable to our understanding of writing transfer in the context of multimodal composition.

Data include the student's screen recordings with think-aloud protocol, writings produced by the student, interview responses, and class observation notes. The screen recording is chosen as the primary method because it could uncover the ephemeral moments where prior knowledge and literacy practices have been enacted (Yi et al., 2022). Before the project started, Hassan received a brief training on how to record screen and perform think-aloud. Although I invited him to record the entire writing process, he was given the discretion to skip recording and/or think-aloud at any point. This accommodation was made out of ethical consideration and respect for the participant's privacy. To compensate for the loss of data, stimulated recall was conducted as the first part of the post-project interview to understand the behaviors observed in the screen recordings. The second half of the interview invited the student

to discuss their feelings about and experience of the video project. Over the five weeks of the project, I attended every class session as a non-participating observer and took notes of students' responses and interactions. Data collection yielded eight screen recordings of Hassan's writing process (256 minutes in total), a post-project interview (75 minutes), four written assignments submitted by Hassan, and class observation notes that I took during the project.

Data Analysis

As the first step of data analysis, I watched the screen recordings repeatedly and translated the screen recordings into descriptive language. The interview was transcribed verbatim into written English. Guided by Haskell's (2000) definition of learning transfer, I coded the screen recording transcripts, interview responses, and written reflection inductively, paying special attention to instances and moments where prior knowledge were enacted and transferred. Student's writing and class observation notes were used to triangulate the findings and generate a more holistic account of the student's actions and thoughts. To ensure research rigor, I asked the participant to member check the initial findings and confirm that the findings did not deviate too far from his perspective as the focal participant.

Findings

For the multimodal project, Hassan produced a seven-minute video about plastic waste on the ASU campus. His video features a fast-paced demonstration of the severity of the problem, deploying a mixture of images, upbeat music, and verbal narration. At different stages of the project, Hassan was observed drawing on procedural, genre, and rhetorical knowledge that he developed from various previous literacy activities. Moreover, Hassan's understanding about writing has been greatly challenged by the multimodal project, which led to a conceptual breakthrough. But at the same time, while highly engaged in the video creation, the student reported confusion when the expanded understanding of "writing" did not seem to fit perfectly into his existing knowledge schema.

Procedural Knowledge in Pre-Task Planning

As the first step of the project, Hassan created an outline to guide the subsequent researching and composing process, during which he intentionally repurposed the

procedural knowledge of managing information. The pre-task planning was an autonomous, self-motivated act neither required nor instructed by the teacher. In the first screen recording, Hassan was seen brainstorming ideas on a blank page. He first wrote “define the issue; highlight the seriousness; why we should work on it in ASU” as the three main points and then added a fourth one—“suggestion”—to the list. Under each point, Hassan included subsidiary ideas, usually in the form of questions. For example, under “defining the issues,” he added two bullet points: “why recycling?” and “what is the issue of recycling.” These ideas were presented both as complete sentences and sentence fragments. The seemingly “messy” planning, according to Hassan, is what he usually does “for assignment that takes long time to complete” (interview). He further explained that “I like to plan everything out because it’s not like our nature. We forget” (interview).

It is important to note that Hassan used non-linguistic resources, such as color schemes and symbols, to help manage the process (Figure 1). For example, he highlighted the section titles in blue; at the end of the planning stage, he drew a downward-facing arrow pointing to the bottom of the page, under which he wrote, “I need to see first all the action that ASU did to help people recycle, and then I will add simple step that we need to take in the soon future.” When asked to justify his decision, Hassan said that using different colors could help “distinguish between the main idea and information” (interview). Furthermore, Hassan explained that with the help of colors and symbols, he could form a “concept map” that contributes to positive learning outcomes: “I really like the concept map in every book, after each unit, we have something called concept map. So, this is the way where I do my concept map in different style. I link everything” (interview). The “books” that Hassan mentioned were textbooks in other disciplines, such as biology and geography. The interview response suggests that when designing his pre-task plan, Hassan was intentionally drawing on the idea of “concept map” that he developed in other disciplinary contexts. Hassan seemed to be highly aware of the importance of planning in completing academic assignments and the affordances of different modes in this process. The ease with which he mobilized the resources in creating the outline illustrated that he possesses thorough procedural knowledge of planning and managing information.

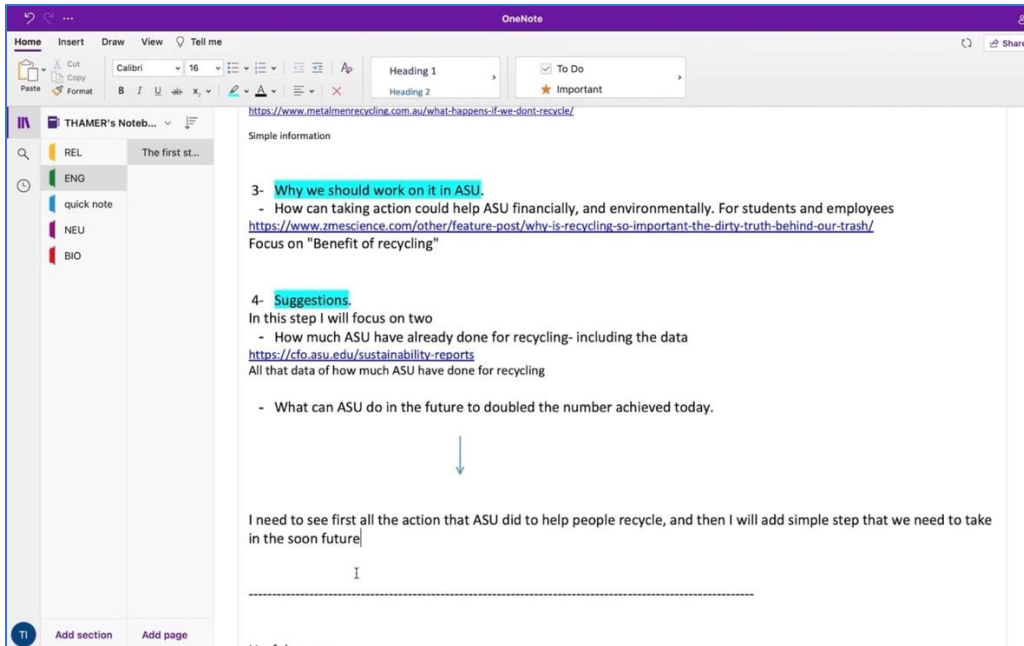


Figure 1. An example of Hassan’s pre-task plan

Genre Knowledge in Bridge Text Construction

The second site of knowledge transfer was the construction of a “bridge text,” where Hassan drew on his genre knowledge about “academic essay.” The bridge text is another self-motivated piece of writing, and it is composed as a preparation for the storyboard assignment. The “bridge” metaphor shows that such a text functions as a midway path toward the final production—a table-format storyboard (Tan, 2023).

Hassan’s bridge text consists of a title— “wording my story board”—and four paragraphs about ASU’s effort to achieve sustainability on campus (Figure 2). Compared to the pre-task plan, Hassan’s bridge text seemed to feature a more coherent representation of ideas. In the first three paragraphs, he introduced ASU as one of the most sustainable universities investing in numerous sustainability initiatives. He then narrowed the focus down to ASU’s efforts of recycling wastes, generating green energy, and establishing research funds. This was followed by a rhetorical move shifting the attention to the discussion of current problems. After writing the four paragraphs, Hassan pulled up the storyboard template and transferred the texts to the “narration” column of the storyboard.

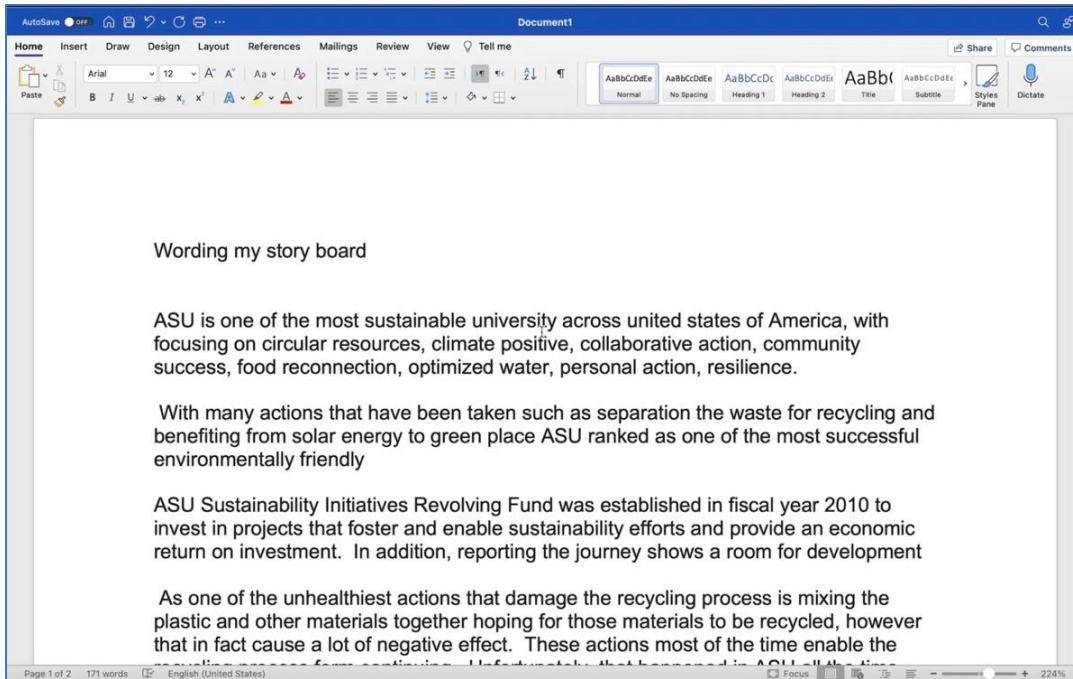


Figure 2. An example of Hassan’s bridge text

As mentioned earlier, the bridge text was not part of the course requirement. When asked about why he took an “extra step” instead of starting with the storyboard template, Hassan provided the following reasons:

Oh, I have never done storyboard. This is the basic way I think about things, because usually in an essay and the structure is very much like this [pointing to the bridge text]. And then once I finish it, I separated and distributed. And then I saw the time, how much it takes, how many times it takes, minutes, sometimes seconds. And then I started building a storyboard. But if I start with building my storyboard as the final structure, I don’t think it’s gonna be easy.

In summary, when faced with the new genre (storyboard), Hassan sought help from the genre that he is familiar with—an essay with predictable structures. The interview also reveals that Hassan was quite strategic in dealing with the challenge and that he was aware of the cognitive load demanded by orchestrating multiple modes at the same time.

Rhetorical Knowledge in Storyboard Composition

In constructing the storyboard, Hassan made an explicit effort to engage and convince the audience and to create a specific persona, which could be traced back to his experience of participating in speech competitions. At times, Hassan demonstrated an acute awareness of audience and rhetorical effect. A revealing moment came when Hassan was reviewing and revising his storyboard. After reading out loud the first three narrations, Hassan paused and asked himself: “how can I sound politician? Oh my god, I’ve never thought convincing people is a such a difficult job!” (screen recording #7). Following this reflection, Hassan rearranged parts of the writing and added another paragraph explaining ASU’s sustainability effort. He then read out the narration again and commented proudly: “I think this one is gonna do well here. I introduced ASU. I introduced it very well!” (screen recording #7). In a subsequent one-on-one conference with the instructor, Hassan asked how the effect on the audience would change if he introduced the problem, instead of ASU, as the first rhetorical move in the video.

The behaviors described above were sustained by Hassan’s knowledge of how argument should be conducted in the current rhetorical situation. In the interview, when asked about how he positioned himself while composing the storyboard, Hassan answered affirmatively that he saw himself as “an influencer,” a person who masters the skills of persuasion:

How much can I influence others? It’s not about the storyboard, or not about being another, but it’s actually very much about “Oh, can I have my idea go easily to others in order to change the idea of other?” That is very much what I was thinking about.

The “influencer” identity is enacted not only through language, but also through “face expression and changing voice” (Interview). Considering non- and paralinguistic elements while engaging in the text-based assignment is not a novel experience for Hassan. In fact, Hassan has developed keen awareness of exercising rhetorical appeals through participating in speech competition in his L1 Arabic, as he described in the following interview excerpt:

Actually, I won a lot of awards in Arabic speech competition. When I talk, I can talk very good yeah. So, when I organize my structure, I didn't really focus on the words, but how can I use this word with my face expression and my voice in order to convince people. It wasn't the word itself, because my word is really limited in English. I may do this in Arabic, but not in English.

Drawing the connection between the previous experience and the current FYC writing task seems to be made more easily in the context of the multimodal writing. When I asked Hassan whether he would also position himself as an influencer had this been a traditional essay assignment, Hassan admitted that it would be difficult. He also offered his perspective on how a traditional essay assignment may limit his abilities to fully express himself:

Yeah, and that is why most professors don't really get it. I guess they get it, but they don't think it is proper to do. That is why every time I have an essay, I have a problem, because my essay is based on how I talk. But I think English is not how you talk; it's how you write. So, every time with the structure of these things, it's gonna be weaker if it's just an essay. What's gonna be very helpful is I actually talk this. This is my problem in English.

The screen recordings, together with the interview data, reveal that while creating the storyboard, Hassan enacted a particular identity—an eloquent influencer and politician—that is not usually supported by a traditional essay assignment. Such an identity encouraged Hassan to draw on his previous experience of public speaking in L1 Arabic and apply the rhetorical knowledge to the current situation.

Hassan's Reflection on the Video Project

Reflecting on his experience with the video project, Hassan seemed to demonstrate somewhat conflicting viewpoints. On the one hand, he reported that the project was more intellectually challenging than he expected, thus pushing him to see “writing” as a dynamic and continuous process that involves various elements. On the other hand, the change in writing technology seemed to have caused some confusions about the boundary of “writing.”

To begin with, the video project has greatly changed Hassan's understanding of “writing.” His old assumption associating writing with producing academic genres was replaced by an expanded view of writing as a dynamic process. This is best

demonstrated by the following paragraph from Hassan's post-project reflection in response to the question, "what was your theory of writing coming to ENG 107? How has your theory of writing evolved with each task?":

I thought I was going to learn how to write academically, what I mean by how to write is that we are going to learn to write our introduction in English way. However, none of that happened in ENG 107. The curriculum was higher and heavier than just writing. I feel we learned how to use our brain critically first and then how can make up a piece on things and after that how to draw a clear map for your writing (post-project reflection).

As shown in the excerpt above, for Hassan, the meaning of writing is now extended to include not only the final product, but also the process of thinking critically and creatively. His interview response echoed this point, placing special emphasis on the mental activities in writing:

Rhetorical analysis is how you use your brain, brain, brain. It's all about the brain. Can you analyze this reading? Brain, brain, brain. This is an experience of writing. It wasn't about really doing this, but the process of doing this.

Apart from the increased attention to "writing process," Hassan also demonstrated enhanced rhetorical awareness and rhetorical flexibility, as he explained how linguistic adjustment is needed in a new rhetorical situation: "Outside the classroom most of the audience are normal people and using academic language with normal people is inappropriate. In this class I learned how to adapt to any environment and use it to my benefit" (post-project reflection). In terms of academic writing, Hassan also adopted a more sophisticated understanding that places "how" before "what": "How can you convince people, audience? How can you have a strong argument or strong opinion? That is different from what I used to know about writing. It's not just putting your ideas. No, no but how you put" (interview).

But at the same time, Hassan also showed confusion in the interview, when he was invited to envision how he could apply the knowledge learned in the current project to future writing scenarios:

So here is the thing, when you guys mention writing... Right now, I get so confused because before I take writing as a little thing, all writing is pen and

paper. Right now, the idea developed; it's more about actually thinking. It's more process here before you actually use it.

The analysis of Hassan's reflection and interview responses illustrate that the student developed a deeper understanding of composition in the digital age. But at the same time, Hassan also reported a sense of confusion when the definition of writing was extended far beyond the scope of "pen and paper."

Discussion

This qualitative study investigated how a multilingual student transferred prior knowledge to produce a video proposal and how such an experience affords opportunities for learning and reflection. The first research question explores the types of knowledge mobilized by the student in the context of a multimodal project. The analysis suggests that the student tapped into different domains of knowledge at different stages of the project. In pre-task planning, Hassan used the procedural knowledge of brainstorming and information management, which was developed and practiced in learning subject content in high school. While constructing the bridge text, he mobilized the genre knowledge to create "essay-like" writing. When drafting the storyboard using the template, he positioned himself as an influencer and politician and drew on the rhetorical knowledge practiced in the experience of delivering public speech in L1 Arabic. These findings are in line with the argument that multimodal composing could create a favorable learning space that allows multilingual students to draw on a wide range of prior knowledge and literacy practices (DePalma, 2015; Hafner, 2015; Jiang et al., 2020; Kang, 2022). More importantly, the current study shows that different kinds of knowledge were activated at different stages of the project and that the transfer of knowledge is afforded by different task conditions. This finding debunks the myth that multimodal writing is "something to do with digital stuff and having fun" (Bazalgett & Buckingham, 2012, p. 3). In fact, the current study suggests that the successful completion of multimodal tasks requires the students to possess some basic knowledge about writing and to actively access their knowledge repertoire throughout the process.

The second research question seeks to understand how knowledge transfer takes place in the current multimodal writing context. The data analysis suggests a combination of "remix" and "critical incident" in Hassan's use of prior knowledge. In most cases, Hassan successfully integrated the new experience of video making into the existing knowledge schema, thus forming a holistic understanding of what it means

to “write” in the digital age. For example, in composing the storyboard, Hassan not only considered what information to present, but also how he could present such information in a rhetorically powerful way. The explicit focus on rhetorical effectiveness proved to be an important part in Hassan’s public speaking experience, where he orchestrated various modal resources to reach the audience. Through the video project, Hassan was able to bridge the experience of delivering a public speech with the current and future context of academic writing, explaining that the latter also demands effective persuasion. These findings illustrate that the multimodal writing experience, as facilitated in an academic context, contributes to the formation of a sophisticated understanding of writing (Balzotti, 2016). However, Hassan also reported confusion about what counts as “writing.” His interview response seems to suggest that by involving various digital composing tools and modes, the current project not only challenges his assumption about writing, but also blurs the boundary of writing. The single instance of confusion, however, should not be interpreted as a sign of failure. In fact, as shown in the findings, Hassan adopted a positive attitude toward the challenges and showed a willingness to embrace different writing scenarios. Although he might not be able to clearly articulate the definition of writing, the feeling is likely to be temporary and might signal a necessary transitional process (Yancey et al., 2014).

The last research question asks how the design of the multimodal project opens up access to learning. Three design factors contribute significantly to the positive observation. The first one is the process-based nature of the video project. The current project design incorporates several small assignments, such as the storyboard, to facilitate video creation. It is through completing these assignments that Hassan began to see writing more as a process than a product. Researchers of multimodal composition have advocated for an equal emphasis on the composing process and the final product (Shipka, 2005). Placing the focus on composing process not only lowers the stakes for students who have little experience with video making, but also allows them more room for problem solving through multiple trials. Second, the video project encourages students to make rhetorical decisions for themselves, which is conducive to fostering learner agency. Hassan was able to decide what persona he wanted to present and how he could most effectively persuade his audience. The imagined “politician” identity prompted him to draw on his public speaking experience and make rhetorical and linguistic decisions in accordance with the situation. Previous research on teaching for transfer has identified a sense of writerly agency as an important characteristic for constructing new knowledge (Yancey et al., 2018). Last but not least, the course design engaged students in discussing

writing-related concepts and invited them to develop their own “writing theory.” These tasks could offer students the opportunity to critically examine their assumptions about writing, compare the new experience with the old one, make connections, and update their understanding, all of which are critical to developing rhetorical flexibility and facilitating writing transfer (Balzotti, 2016; DePalma, 2015; Yancey et al., 2018).

This study has several limitations. First, the findings about Hassan should by no means be interpreted as representative of all multilingual students. In fact, the purposive data sampling method intends to generate detailed insights of a particular case, rather than identifying a general pattern among a certain group. Second, the screen recordings collected in the present study may not capture the entire composing process, as Hassan was allowed to skip recording at his discretion. Thus, it is likely that some instances of knowledge transfer that took place in the actual process were not recorded and presented in the dataset. Nevertheless, the screen recording method, together with think-aloud protocol, allows the researcher to examine the situated and complex composing process in a digital context (Yi et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This case study sheds light on how knowledge transfer takes place in the context of multimodal composition. The analysis highlights the potential of the video project in supporting the use of prior knowledge and creating learning opportunities for multilingual students. The current study, as well as many previous ones (e.g., DePalma, 2015), focuses on how the use of prior knowledge contributes to the creation of multimodal texts. Few studies (e.g., Ball et al., 2013) were conducted to understand how the multimodal composing experience could be transformed to other, especially text-based, writing scenarios. Future research could explore how students make the connections between the multimodal composition practiced in a writing course, and other writing activities. Despite the scarcity of empirical data, teachers who want to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills from multimodal assignments to other rhetorical situations are advised to engage students in the explicit discussion of the similarities between current and future writing assignments (Ball et al., 2013).

The study reports positive knowledge transfer observed in a single case, thus personal idiosyncrasy should be taken into consideration. The fact that Hassan rather enjoys thinking and writing might play a crucial role in shaping this learning experience in the current video project. It is important to remember that the transfer of knowledge in multimodal composing might not happen easily or at all for some students

(Shepherd, 2018). Building on the literature of writing transfer, researchers could investigate what contextual and individual factors would enable or hinder the transfer of knowledge in multimodal composing. Such an inquiry contributes meaningfully to the discussion of a teaching-for-transfer framework (Yancey et al., 2018).

In terms of pedagogical implications, the study highlights the importance of adopting a process approach, allowing students to make rhetorical decisions, and engaging students in the reflection on writing concepts. Echoing Ball et al.'s (2013) reflection, I would also like to highlight that the three design features outlined in this study have the potential to offer students a meaningful learning experience. An important takeaway is that multimodal composition should be approached and taught as a rhetorical act enabled by the flexible use of old and new knowledge, rather than as a single, formulaic genre. Teachers who are interested in multimodal composing should bear in mind that different task configurations will create different learning opportunities, which leads to different learning outcomes. Thus, multimodal tasks should be designed in accordance with the expected outcomes and discussed in terms of design features. Instead of using the blanket term “multimodal writing,” future discussions and teaching should attend more to students’ responses to the specific task environment and their cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement with the activity design.

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Open Words: Access and English Studies

Vol. 15, no. 1 (2023): 44–63.

DOI: 10.37514/OPW-J.2023.15.1.03

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online)

<https://wac.colostate.edu/openwords/>

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