EXPLORING EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF IMPLEMENTING MULTIMODALITY IN TEACHING WRITING AT NAM CAN THO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract:
English writing skill is an important skill in language teaching for English teachers in the Vietnamese context. This study investigates the perceptions and practices of English teachers in implementing multimodality in teaching English writing skills at Nam Can Tho University. The study used a mixed method, including data collection from a survey with closed-ended questions and semi-structured interviews. The participants who responded to the survey included 45 English teachers at Nam Can Tho University and seven English teachers who responded to the interview questions. The results show that most teachers have a positive perception of the benefits of multimodality in improving learners' motivation and writing ability. However, many teachers still have limited practical skills, especially in designing and assessing multimodal writing tasks. In addition, difficulties such as examination-oriented curricula, lack of technological resources and differences in students' technological level are also major barriers. The study recommends enhancing professional training, developing specific assessment frameworks and adjusting training programs to more effectively support the teaching of multimodal writing skills in the context of modern English language teaching.

Keywords: multimodal, writing skills, EFL teachers, EFL teaching

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the development of technology and science, the means of communication and meaning making have increasingly become more multimodal, complementing from written-linguistic modes to other modes that combine visual (e.g. text, color, images), audio (e.g. sound, music), gestural (e.g. facial expressions, teachers' gestures, body language) and spatial (e.g. classroom organization, movements, position

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of layout) patterns (Prieto *et al.*, 2018; Vungthong, 2017; Nguyen, 2018). Nowadays, a multimodal approach can include linguistic, visual, gestural, auditory and spatial modes, because different modes can enhance learners in expressing ideas in their writing learning process (Hafner and Ho, 2020).

In Vietnam, the growing emphasis on English language education can be observed through the increasing time dedicated to the subject in 2008, when English language teaching and learning in Vietnam in response to the growing demands of global purposes. The Vietnamese Prime Minister issued Decision N0 1400/QĐ-TTg on September 30, 2008, approving the National Foreign Languages Project (shortened as Project 2020 or NFL), titled "Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System for the Period 2008-2020." During this period, one of the crucial issues of learning writing in Vietnam is that teachers emphasize on helping students pass their exams and passively accept the knowledge presented by their teachers (Nguyen, 2018). As a result, Dr. Duong (2014) mentioned in the interview that the traditional one-dimensional writing teaching mode can demotivate them because it is irrelevant to their experiences in real-life contexts.

Therefore, teachers need to change their traditional methods of writing instructions by implementing multimodal modes to develop students' ability of multimodal semantic comprehension (Bui, 2018; Cope, 2020). EFL teachers need to change and address the gap between traditional teaching approaches and new instructional ways (Nguyen, 2020). When implementing different multimodal modes, including images, videos, audio, gestures and spatial mode for students into the writing process, teachers motivate students to analyze the connections between various modes and enhance their abilities in writing in different situations (Cárcamo *et al.*, 2016, Hu, 2024). Students can transform their understanding by applying different modes, such as speech, images, and writing to their learning. Teachers also have an opportunity to acknowledge the necessity of implementing multimodality into their teaching writing classrooms to address academic and social needs (Le, 2013).

This study aims to (1) investigate EFL teachers' perceptions about implementing multimodal modes in writing classrooms, (2) explore teachers' familiarity and understanding, (3) explore their practices, and (4) explore the challenges of implementing multimodality in writing teaching contexts at universities in Vietnam.

2. Literature review

2.1 Definition of multimodality

Research on multimodality has expanded increasingly since the publication of the foundational study, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures" (The New London Group (NLG), 1996), which involves meaning-making through a variety of communicative channels such as written-linguistic, visual, audio, gestures and spatial modes. These modes are used to make meaning based on the semiotic resources. Over the past decade, the field of EFL teaching witnessed a development of classroom research

on multimodality, especially in 2008 with Jewitt's earlier literature review of multimodality. NLG scholars such as Kress (2003; 2010; Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Jewitt & Kress, 2010) mention their definitions about implementing social semiotics to provide more modes and more opportunities to express meaning. Since the development of multiple modes became the focus, the multimodality was set as an approach to teaching and learning involving five different modes of meaning making, including linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes (Kress, 2003; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). At the same time, multimodal has become the trend in research on multimodal writing with different aspects are far developed (Chien, 2023), such as conceptions of identity, authorship and meaning-making (Kress, 2010), media modes (Leent and Mills, 2018), videos (Beavis, 2013), multimodal texts in teaching (Le, 2013; Tran, 2022), linguistic mode or types of multimodal writing tasks (Lim and Polio, 2020).

Despite the growing attention on multimodal writing, researchers still face difficulties in conceptualize and understanding writing that involves multiple multimodal modes (Prior, 2017). Teachers may not have a fully understanding and experience in preparing for implementing multimodality in their writing instructions, and have little training and competence in multimodal achievement (Tran, 2022). In the field of EFL teaching writing, Miller (2013) suggested that it is necessary to conduct more research on how teachers implement multimodal modes in their teaching. Moreover, teachers need clear guidance and support from their colleges and universities to scaffold the implementation of multimodal forms in teaching writing (Mills, 2010; Howell *et al.*, 2017).

2.2 The framework of five modes in multimodality

In this study, multimodality is divided into five main modes that EFL teachers might implement in their writing classrooms. This study seeks to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of implementing multimodality in the EFL teaching writing context. According to the theoretical framework of multimodality from the pioneer The New London Group (1996) and Kress (2010), this study is conducted based on the framework as in Figure 1.1.
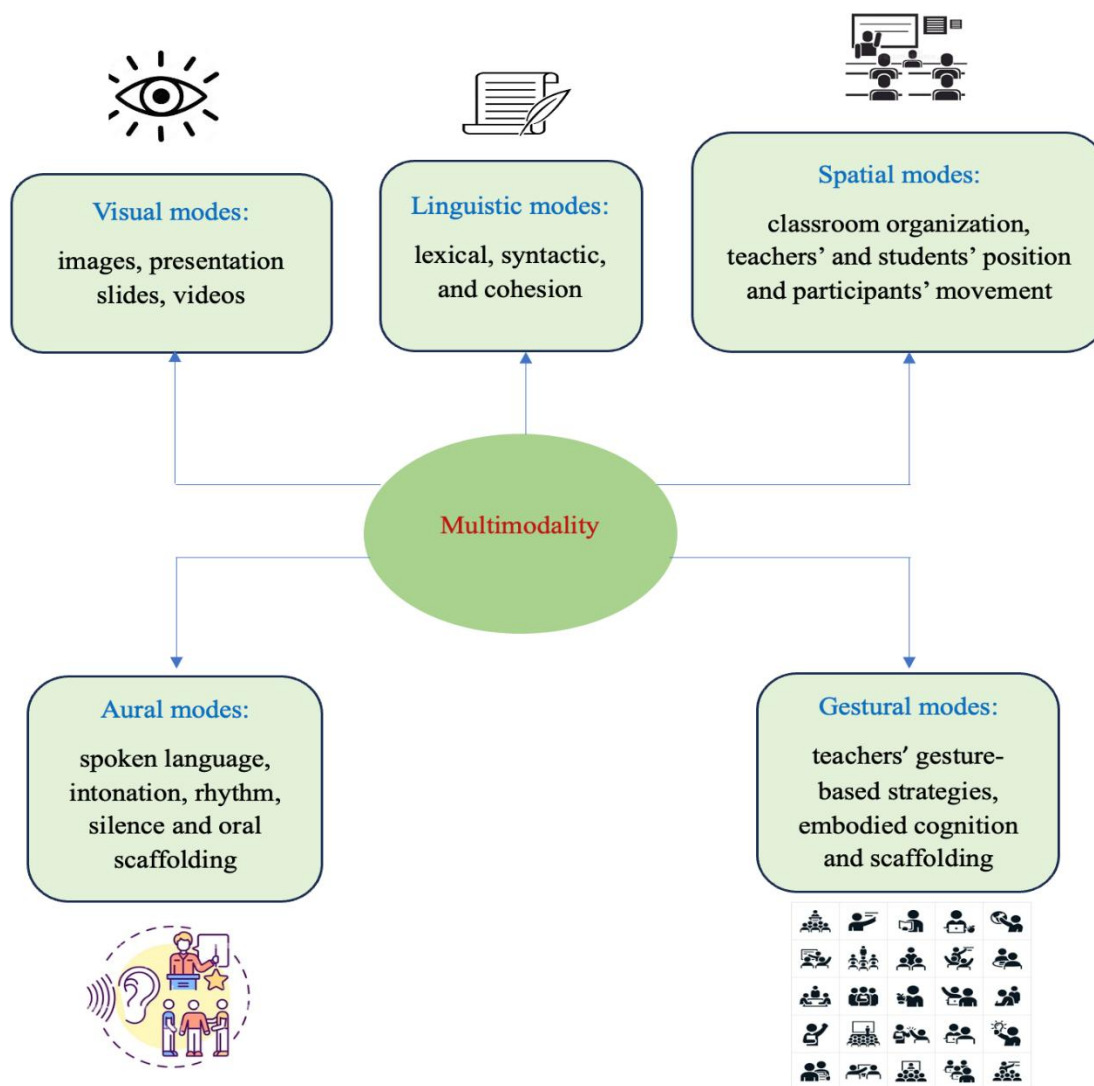
Figure 1.1: Five modes of multimodality (NLG, 1996, Kress, 2010)

A mode is a means of communicating which allows students to communicate with each other, such as in writing or other skills. According to the New London Group (1996), there are five modes of multimodality, including visual, linguistic, spatial, aural and gestural modes.

2.2.1 Visual modes

Words alone cannot effectively create meaning in the field of EFL teaching. Therefore, teachers' writing instructions should involve the images and visual forms to provide meaningful lessons (Bezemer & Kress, 2010). In this study, the visual mode refers to the images and characters that teachers and students can use to create meaning. Moreover, meanings can be created in the language of images through color, layout, style, size and perspective, which can be a part of interaction. Bearne & Wolstencroft (2007) mentioned that visual language, including a chart or diagram, can be manifested on a page as a

powerful means to convey meaning. In this case, visual and verbal elements complement and compensate each other to create meaning within a document.

2.2.2 Linguistic modes

Studies have linked specific linguistic elements of the written text to writing proficiency and development since the 1970s. The linguistic features examined by writing researchers fall into three large constructs, including lexical, syntactic, and cohesion (McNamara *et al.*, 2010). Language features are also important elements of identifying discourse structures, such as claims, arguments, theses, and rhetorical moves. One of the important considerations when assessing linguistic features in writing samples involves the writing task itself, with the understanding that different writing tasks may require different linguistic skills (Plakans, 2008; Plakans & Gebril, 2013). Most early studies of writing focused on independent writing samples where writers were generally expected to produce a classic five-paragraph essay within a specific timeframe.

2.2.3 Spatial modes

Multimodality has gained popularity in the EFL field due to its ability to improve English students' skills. The spatial mode, which refers to the organization and use of physical space in the classroom, plays a critical but often underexplored role in shaping language learning experiences. The spatial mode is deeply embedded in classroom design and interaction. It involves the physical layout of the classroom, the positioning and movement of teachers and learners, and the organization of teaching materials in space (Van Leeuwen, 2015). In EFL classrooms, the spatial mode is particularly important in supporting teachers and students' learning and teaching process through interactive and embodied learning. Teachers often use space to scaffold meaning by moving closer to students during explanations, using the board to anchor key vocabulary, or guiding attention toward multimodal texts displayed in the room. The spatial mode, as defined in social semiotics, includes the layout and organization of the classroom, the positioning of teachers and students, the movement and proximity of participants, and the use of objects and materials within the space (Van Leeuwen, 2015).

2.2.4 Aural modes

The aural mode supports the **development of voice and tone in writing**. As students become familiar with different styles of spoken English from formal academic speech to informal conversation, they develop a sense of **register and audience awareness**, which are key aspects of effective writing (Hyland, 2003). This aligns with Cumming's (2001) observation that writing is often strengthened when students engage in pre-writing activities involving listening and speaking. Therefore, the implementation of the aural mode has been implemented through **multimodal tasks** such as listen-and-write summaries, audio prompts for essay responses, and collaborative podcast projects that lead into writing assignments. These activities encourage students to actively transform aural input into written output, promoting **transmodal literacy skills** (Stein and

Newfield, 2008). They also build critical listening abilities, which are foundational to synthesizing and responding to information in written form.

2.2.5 Gestural modes

In terms of implementing gestural mode, gesture refers to any of a variety of movements, including movement of hands and arms, adjustment of posture, touching of oneself (e.g., stroking one's hair), various (nervous) ticks and other fiddling movements that people use while talking (Kendon, 1996). According to McNeill (1992) and Kress (2010), there are some main types of gestural modes that EFL teachers can implement in their writing class, including representational gestures, instructional gestures, affective gestures and transmodal movement. Teachers implement representational gestures to show or *represent* objects, actions, or events physically. And instructional gesture to show their movements used to guide classroom actions and tasks. In transmodal movement, teachers use gestures to move meaning from one mode, such as gesture or speech, to another mode, such as written text. The purpose of these different types of gestures is to engage a positive learning environment and help students express emotions and attitudes.

2.3 Multimodality in teaching writing in Vietnam

Writing is considered the most difficult of the four English skills, as it requires complex processes of idea generation, organization, and language presentation (Nunan & Choi, 2015; Nation, 2009). In Vietnam, the teaching of English writing is often influenced by traditional educational philosophies and standardized testing, in which teachers focus on grammar and structure rather than content development. Students are mainly guided through model essays and have few opportunities to participate in activities such as feedback, revision, or peer review (Grabe & Kaplan, 1997).

To improve this situation, the process-oriented writing approach has been recommended. This approach focuses on the writer and the process of developing ideas through the stages of prewriting, planning, drafting, reflecting, revising, editing, and publishing (Johnson, 2008). In Vietnam, studies such as Vo & Hoa (2024) and Bui (2022) show that this approach significantly improves EFL students' writing ability.

In particular, when integrated with multimodal pedagogy using text, images, audio, video, students are encouraged to express their ideas more creatively and deeply (Nguyen, 2013). However, the simultaneous application of these two methods still faces challenges such as a lack of resources, teacher training and large class sizes. The current study applies process-based writing teaching models and the concept of multimodality (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) to survey the practice of teaching writing skills at Nam Can Tho University, thereby proposing solutions to improve the quality of teaching English writing.

2.3.1 Benefits of implementing multimodality in teaching writing

In the context of teaching English as a second language writing in Vietnam, teachers face many difficulties in providing appropriate input, giving effective feedback and connecting learning content to social contexts (Nguyen, 2009). According to Hyland (2003), writing is not just about organizing grammar or structure, but also about expressing personal opinions, purposes and appropriate genres. This view is shared by many scholars such as Akkaya and Kırmızı (2010) and Nunan (2015), who argue that writing is an act of expressing thoughts, emotions and practical goals, and is also a higher-order skill according to Bloom's taxonomy (1956).

Several recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of multimodal approaches in teaching writing. Kim and Kang (2020) assert that multimodal collaborative writing (MMC) helps learners develop comprehensive language skills. Chien (2023) also found that using multimodal writing portfolios helps novice researchers understand academic structures and improve both content and language skills. Kim *et al.* (2023) found that students produced longer texts when using digital multimodal writing (DMC) than when using traditional writing. Cunningham (2019) found that video feedback improved the comprehension and revision of writing more than written feedback. These studies confirm the positive role of multimodal strategies in improving the quality of teaching and learning English writing in EFL classrooms.

2.3.2 Challenges of implementing multimodal modes in teaching writing

Globally, EFL writing classrooms face several common challenges. One prominent issue is the diversity in learners' proficiency levels, making it challenging to design writing tasks that are suitable for all students. Many learners lack exposure to authentic writing contexts, which diminishes their ability to develop practical and applicable writing skills. Traditional teaching methods often prioritize grammar and syntax over creative or communicative writing. Moreover, writing in a second language can cause anxiety, resulting in low motivation and confidence among learners (Bhowmik & Kim, 2022).

In addition, the complexity of writing skills causes students and teachers to face manifold problems. Dar and Khan (2015) reported that average anxiety, which most students in the study suffered when writing, caused avoidance behaviors. Students' anxiety is also mentioned in the research of Fareed *et al.* (2016) as a popular issue during writing classes. Their findings indicated that teachers have difficulties seeking suitable teaching methods, allocating more time to practice for students, and facilitating them to generate more ideas for writing. Therefore, the importance of teaching writing starkly manifests itself in two factors, including the ability to motivate students to write and the assessment of their writing ability.

In response to these challenges, innovative practices are gaining traction worldwide, especially in the EFL teaching writing context in Vietnam. The process writing approach, emphasizing iterative drafting, peer feedback, and revisions, has become widely adopted to refine learners' writing skills. And multimodal modes with

five different modes and elements need to be implemented in EFL teaching writing classrooms.

2.4 Previous studies

Scholars have drawn attention to and developed the field of multimodal writing with a variety of studies.

Nelson (2006) examined four undergraduates' multimedia texts by applying Kress's (2003) notions of synesthesia related to psychological processes, when ideas shift from one mode to the other. Four English language learners enrolled in Multimedia Writing at UC Berkeley were selected for the qualitative study, conducted over an eleven-week period. The one-hour writing course was designed to involve creating multimedia writing via a computer. Using topics related to language, culture, and identity, individual students wrote a personal statement in the form of digital storytelling. A variety of data, including the students' journals, interviews, and essay drafts, were collected and analyzed. The findings were consistent with previous research on using multimodality to teach English language learners. A multimodal element, such as an image, provides alternative ways for these students to understand authorial expression. Images, as well as verbal expressions, came to enable a deeper and clearer meaning through the synesthetic process of shifting modals.

Shin and Cimasko (2008) conducted a qualitative study in a college ESL (English as a Second Language) class to examine how students use available modes to create multimodal argumentative essays. Using Kress's synesthetic semiosis, the multimodal writing projects and assignments of fourteen undergraduates were analyzed. After being instructed how to make a simple web page, their first assignment was to create personal websites using Dreamweaver and Microsoft Word. Next, the students worked on writing traditional print-based texts to post on the website. For this activity, the instructor encouraged students to consider including all useful elements regardless of linguistic or nonlinguistic mode. By comparing and contrasting traditional argumentative essays and multimodal texts, the students had opportunities to discuss how modes such as images, audio, video, and hyperlinks could contribute to forming a unified argument. All of the participants placed a priority on the linguistic over other modes, even if the instructor introduced multimodal elements to make writing effective. In many cases, the synthesizing process showed an unequal relationship between the linguistic and other available modes. The students' limited use of multimodal elements was because the lessons emphasized traditional elements of argument rather than how to use multimodality.

In a study by Early and Marshall (2008), the teacher used a visual aid as a mediating tool to help students understand and interpret linguistically complex and abstract concepts in a short story. She used a visual representation called a mandala, which is rooted in Buddhism, as a non-linguistic symbol to represent complicated concepts. Students were required to have their mandala contain symbols and quotes from the text to illustrate the essence of characters, styles, and themes. When given visual aids,

students tended to engage in multiple readings by working between two modes. As a final project, students chose their own topic from among three elements (characterization, style, and theme), and then wrote an essay about the short story based on analysis of the group. Students' written reflections, as well as interviews, reported that they seemed to read the text more carefully and critically.

A study conducted by Tran (2022) aimed to examine the influence of multimodalities on the perception of Vietnamese EFL high school students and the reactions of high school students to cultural input in cultural learning. It was structured as an experimental study, employing a mixed-methods approach that utilized pre- and post-questionnaires, as well as semi-structured interviews, to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 135 high school students participated in the research. The findings revealed a significant enhancement in high school students' understanding of culture and communication. Additionally, the participants strongly acknowledged the beneficial impacts of multimodalities on their English language learning. Ultimately, the study's outcomes offer implications for improving the effectiveness of culture and communication teaching and learning at the upper secondary level. However, the study failed to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions and practices in using multimodal composition in writing instruction.

Tran (2022) conducted a study on the current situation of multimodal modes-teaching competence of students majoring in Philology, University of Education - Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam. In Vietnam, the introduction of new curricula and textbooks is underway, necessitating a modernization of teacher training programs nationwide to foster competency development. This article discusses research findings pertaining to competencies and the ability to teach multimodal modes in alignment with the demands of competency development. This study failed to address the perceptions and practices of multimodal text integration in education by EFL teachers.

In conclusion, there is a gap in research focusing on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the use of multimodal composition in EFL writing contexts. These related studies have explored various pedagogical approaches, theoretical frameworks, and instructional strategies related to teaching writing and multimodal literacy, but there is a lack of research that investigates EFL teachers' perceptions and practices using multimodal composition instruction in their writing classrooms. Therefore, addressing this gap is crucial for gaining an understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and practices associated with using multimodal composition in EFL writing instruction and for informing and curriculum design efforts aimed at enhancing EFL writing pedagogy.

3. Material and Methods

This study uses mixed-methods, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. The combination of the two methods aims to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth view of the perceptions and practices of English writing teachers at Nam Can Tho University when applying multimodal tools.

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), the use of mixed methods allows the researcher to exploit the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of each individual method. Furthermore, the qualitative method plays a role in verifying and supplementing the quantitative results, and helps explain unclear phenomena from the survey data.

The study was conducted in two main phases. The first phase used a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale to collect quantitative data on teachers' perceptions. The next phase was a semi-structured interview, which helped to explore teachers' practical abilities and the difficulties they encountered when applying multimodality in teaching writing skills. Both tools were designed in Vietnamese to ensure accuracy and ease of understanding for participants.

The combination of questionnaires and interviews not only helps to verify and compare the results but also increases the reliability of the study. This is consistent with the view of Aaron (2011), who argues that "*combining quantitative and qualitative data adds depth and strength to the study*" (p.274).

3.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire is the main tool for collecting quantitative data from 45 lecturers teaching writing skills using multimodal means at Nam Can Tho University. This tool is designed based on the theoretical overview and previous studies, to ensure the reasonableness in terms of content and structure. The questionnaire consists of two main parts:

- **Part A**: Collect personal information such as experience in teaching English writing and the frequency of applying multimodal means in writing classes of participants.
- **Part B:** Includes 30 questions divided into 3 main groups corresponding to factors related to EFL teachers' perceptions of implementing multimodal methods in writing classes at Nam Can Tho University, including:
  o Level of understanding how to apply multimodal means in teaching English writing skills (questions 1–10),
  o Ability to practice multimodal means in teaching English writing skills (questions 11-20),
  o Difficulties in applying multimodal means in teaching English writing skills (questions 21-30).

All items in section B use a 5-point Likert scale, including: 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, and 5 - strongly agree, helping to quantify the level of agreement of the lecturer with each factor. According to Brown (2001), the Likert scale is a popular and effective form in language research because it allows researchers to assess learners' attitudes, perceptions and feelings quantitatively.

The questionnaire was written in Vietnamese to ensure that all participants could understand the content and respond accurately. Before its official release, the questionnaire was tested through a small pilot study to assess the clarity and reliability of each survey item. After editing, the questionnaire was sent to 45 lecturers teaching writing skills using multimedia at Nam Can Tho University via Google Forms; 45 valid responses were used for analysis.

3.2 Interviews

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data and clarify the content reflected in the survey. This is a flexible form of interview, in which the researcher uses a list of open-ended questions that have been prepared in advance but can be adjusted during the discussion to explore specific issues in more depth (Dörnyei, 2007).

The interview questions were developed based on the preliminary results from the survey as well as the theoretical framework of factors affecting reading comprehension skills. The interview content revolved around: (1) Awareness and ability to practice multimodal means in teaching English writing skills; (2) Difficulties in applying multimodal means in teaching English writing skills; (3) Suggestions and wishes of lecturers in improving methods of teaching English writing skills.

The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to create a comfortable feeling and encourage the lecturers to share naturally. Each interview lasted from 15 to 20 minutes, and was recorded and transcribed in full for later qualitative analysis. 7 lecturers were selected for interviews on a voluntary basis and ensured diversity in terms of gender, experience in teaching English writing skills, and frequency of applying multimodal means in teaching.

4. Results and Discussion

After distributing a survey of 30 questions to 45 English writing instructors with experience in applying multimodal means at Nam Can Tho University, the research team processed the data using SPSS version 22 software, with descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation (SD). The survey questions were divided into three main groups of factors, including surveying the awareness, practical ability and difficulties of English instructors in implementing multimodal modes in teaching writing skills.

Firstly, to understand the perception of English writing teachers in applying multimodal means, Table 4.1 below presents the survey results on the perception of teachers. The mean and standard deviation (SD) indicators help reflect the level of consensus as well as the variation in the perception of the survey participants.

Table 4.1: EFL teachers' perceptions of implementing
multimodal modes in teaching writing skills

Statements	Mean	SD
1. I am familiar with the concept of multimodality in language teaching.	4.13	.55
2. I understand how multimodal modes can improve students' writing skills.	3.53	.92
3. I can clearly define the difference between monomodal and multimodal writing.	3.89	.80
4. I know how to identify different modes such as visual, audio, spatial in student writing.	3.82	.72
5. I understand how multimodal writing tasks can align with curriculum objectives.	4.27	.54
6. I am aware of the theoretical frameworks that support multimodal writing instruction.	3.33	1.04
7. I believe multimodal instruction supports learner engagement in writing.	3.27	1.07
8. I am knowledgeable about how multimodality can be assessed in writing assignments.	2.47	.94
9. I am aware of how multimodal writing can support students' diverse learning styles.	2.31	.97
10. I understand the role of multimodal texts in real-world communication.	3.53	.94

The survey data revealed a high level of familiarity with the term multimodality among the teachers (M = 4.13, SD = .55). Most of the responding teachers agreed that they had encountered the term and were aware of its relevance in teaching English, especially writing skills. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown teachers' greater exposure to multimodal concepts in language teaching (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2010). The interview results further supported this view of the survey. For example, one instructor commented:

"I understand multimodality as the use of multiple modes of communication in teaching, not just speech or writing. We need to use different modes together in teaching writing to support students' writing." (Instructor 1)

Such responses suggest that while instructors are conceptually familiar with the concept of multimodality, this knowledge may be primarily surface-level or experiential rather than deeply theoretical.

Although the majority of instructors were familiar with the concept of multimodality, some instructors reported that they had limited understanding of the theoretical frameworks of multimodal pedagogy. The statement "I know the theoretical frameworks that support multimodal writing instruction" had a moderate mean score (M = 3.33, SD = 1.04), indicating variation in instructors' confidence in their understanding of the concept of multimodality.

Some instructors admitted that they learned about multimodality informally through reading or professional experience, rather than through structured training. As one instructor interviewed noted:

"Most of what I know comes from my teaching experiences or conversations with my colleagues. I would much rather have access to explicit models or frameworks in training programs or workshops." (Instructor 5)

In contrast, instructors demonstrated strong agreement that multimodal text was consistent with curriculum goals (M = 4.27, SD = .54), suggesting that they recognized its pedagogical relevance, even if implementation remained partial. EFL teachers expressed strong conceptual support for multimodal writing instruction. They recognized its relevance to real-world communication, its potential to engage students, and its ability to develop critical reading skills. However, implementation remains inconsistent, largely due to a lack of training, assessment tools, and system support.

Secondly, to understand the ability to practice and apply multimodal means of English writing teachers, Table 4.2 below presents the survey results on EFL teachers' ability to practice and implement multimodal modes in teaching writing.

Table 4.2: EFL teachers' ability to practice and
implement multimodal modes in teaching writing

Statements	Mean	SD
11. I can successfully integrate images, videos, or Power Point slides into writing tasks.	4.09	.51
12. I can help students reflect on their use of different modes in writing projects.	4.09	.60
13. I feel confident designing writing lessons that include multimodal modes such as images and videos.	2.02	.69
14. I can guide students in using digital tools to support multimodal writing.	3.78	.64
15. I frequently incorporate visual or multimedia elements into writing tasks.	3.67	.60
16. I am able to assess students' multimodal writing effectively.	2.24	.77
17. I can provide feedback on different modes used in student writing such as text, image and audio.	3.56	.89
18. I use various digital platforms such as Google Slides, Padlet and Canva for writing activities.	3.82	.75
19. I can scaffold multimodal writing tasks for different students' proficiency levels.	3.58	.08
20. I feel well-prepared to integrate multimodal writing instruction into my lessons.	2.82	.96

Survey results indicate that instructors feel quite confident in integrating basic multimodal components into their lessons. The high mean scores for Item 11 (M = 4.09, SD = .51) and Item 12 (M = 4.09, SD = .60) indicate that instructors are able to successfully incorporate images, videos, or links into students' writing assignments and help students reflect on different modes of meaning-making.

Lecturer interviews further illustrate this competency. One lecturer described a tourism brochure project:

"I asked students to design a tourism brochure, in which they had to write a description and also include images, maps, and layout design. Some even added QR codes that linked to video presentations. The purpose is to help students learn how to do a project related to their real-life experiences." (Lecturer 1)

Similarly, lecturer 2 recalled assigning a product advertisement in which students *"had to write persuasive text, design images, and present their advertisement using PowerPoint slides or videos."*

These examples show that instructors are taking practical steps toward multimodal writing, particularly through exercises that reflect real-world genres. Despite basic familiarity with multimodal tools, instructors expressed limited confidence in designing fully multimodal lessons. This is reflected in the lowest mean score for Item 13: *"I feel confident in designing multimodal writing lessons"* (M = 2.02, SD = .69). One of the most consistent themes across both datasets was difficulty in assessing multimodal writing. Item 16 received a low mean score (M = 2.24, SD = .77), indicating discomfort in assessing multimodal products. Instructors frequently mentioned that current assessment methods were not appropriate for multimodal products.

Instructor 7 admitted:

"*I feel confident assessing my student's papers, but not as confident assessing creativity or design.*"

Instructor 2 expressed similar concerns:

"*Some students are good at technology, creating impressive visuals and designing Canva slides for their presentations in class, but their language is weak. Others write well but cannot design or search for any images on the Internet. It is difficult to balance the two.*"

For the Vietnamese EFL context, the next step is to institutionalize multimodal writing in the writing curriculum to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This will enhance the practice and application of multimodal means in teaching writing skills. Finally, to understand the difficulties that teachers encounter when implementing multimodal modes in teaching English writing, Table 4.3 below presents the survey results on the difficulties that teachers encounter when implementing multimodal modes in teaching English writing.

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Table 4.3: EFL teachers' difficulties in implementing multimodal modes in teaching writing

Statements	Mean	SD
21. I lack access to some useful technological tools or resources in my classroom.	2.53	.87
22. I have not received formal training on how to teach multimodal writing.	3.60	.81
23. My school's curriculum focuses more on traditional (text-based) writing instruction.	3.96	.67
24. I find it difficult to assess multimodal writing assignments fairly and consistently.	4.20	.59
25. Large class sizes make it hard to implement multimodal writing tasks effectively.	3.96	.47
26. I do not have enough time in the syllabus to include multimodal writing activities.	2.56	.72
27. Students are not familiar with using digital or multimedia tools for writing tasks.	4.00	.85
28. I feel uncertain about how to support students with limited multimodal tools in writing tasks.	4.16	.52

29. I have difficulties to find appropriate multimodal materials or models for student reference.	2.73	1.07
30. School administrators rarely support or prioritize multimodal writing initiatives.	2.81	1.10

According to the instructor survey, item 21, "*I do not have adequate access to digital tools or resources in my classroom*", received a relatively low mean score of 2.53 (SD = .87), indicating some degree of disagreement among instructors, although the variation reflects different institutional conditions. However, the interview data highlighted the unevenness in the availability of technological infrastructure. For example, lecturer 1 commented, "*Not all classrooms are equipped with projectors or Internet. Some tools, such as projectors or speakers, are in maintenance. Therefore, even if I want to try, the conditions are not always supportive.*" Similarly, lecturer 4 highlighted that "infrastructure is a big problem," adding that "many classrooms lack basic tools like speakers or projectors."

A major barrier identified by instructors was the lack of formal training in multimodal pedagogy. Item 22, "*I have not received formal training in teaching multimodal writing*", had a mean of 3.60 (SD = .81), indicating agreement across participants. All interviewees reported that their knowledge of multimodality was self-taught or acquired through occasional workshops or writing.

Lecturer 2 stated:

"*The university does not provide a structured framework about how to implement multimodal modes such as spatial or gestural modes. I would appreciate a clear tutorial or workshop.*"

Similarly, lecturer 7 explained:

"*I only learn through reading and online experience. I hope our university will organize workshops or share practical tutorials.*"

Finally, organizational support was perceived as inadequate. Item 30, "*My organization rarely supports or prioritizes multimodal writing initiatives*", had a mean of 2.81 (SD = 1.10), reflecting a difference in perceptions. Respondents consistently expressed a need for more encouragement from leadership.

These challenges include technological limitations, lack of training and assessment tools, rigid curricula, time pressures, inconsistent student readiness, and inadequate institutional support. To address these challenges, it will require comprehensive institutional reforms, targeted professional development, and the development of context-sensitive frameworks for teaching and assessing multimodal writing.

5. Recommendations

This study highlights the urgent need for structured professional development opportunities focused on multimodal writing instruction. Universities and teacher

education programs should provide workshops, courses, and continuing education sessions that introduce teachers to the theoretical foundations (Kress, 2010; Stein, 2008) and equip them with practical strategies for designing, implementing, and assessing multimodal writing tasks. Such programs should include practice components, sample lesson plans, and criteria development to ensure immediate application to the classroom. In order to achieve wider adoption, multimodal composition should be formally incorporated into school curricula and learning outcomes. This includes revising syllabi to reflect multimodal literacy as a valid and valuable form of writing, alongside traditional academic writing. Furthermore, assessment systems should be redesigned to support multimodal outcomes by providing clear assessment criteria and frameworks that value both linguistic and visual elements. Building on existing models (Walsh, 2010; Mills & Unsworth, 2017), schools can develop adaptive tools that reflect both creativity and communicative effectiveness.

Many teachers cite inadequate access to digital tools and unreliable infrastructure as barriers. Schools should therefore invest in equipping their classrooms with essential technologies such as projectors, internet access, multimedia software, and computers. Creating digital writing labs or media studios can provide both teachers and students with a space to experiment with multimodal compositions. Additionally, curated resource banks containing tutorials, templates, and examples will further support multimodal instruction.

6. Conclusion

This study explores the perceptions, practices, and challenges that English teachers face when implementing multimodal approaches to teaching writing. Through survey analysis and in-depth interviews with seven teachers at Nam Can Tho University, the findings provide significant insights into the current context of multimodal writing pedagogy in Vietnamese higher education in general and at Nam Can Tho University in particular.

First, the results show that English teachers generally have positive perceptions of multimodality and recognize its pedagogical potential. Teachers consistently note that multimodal practices promote creativity, motivation, critical thinking, and student awareness of audience and purpose. These perceptions are consistent with previous literature that affirms the transformative role of multimodality in promoting 21st-century literacy (Walsh, 2010; Mills & Unsworth, 2017).

Second, most participants had no structured training or theoretical instruction in multimodal composition. Instead, their knowledge came from informal reading, individual workshops, or collaboration with colleagues. Thus, although teachers demonstrated creative initiative, the lack of institutional support, clear curriculum guidelines, and validated assessment tools limited their effectiveness and consistency in implementing multimodal instruction.

Finally, the study identified a number of persistent challenges that impede the wider adoption of multimodal writing pedagogies. Key barriers include the absence of appropriate assessment criteria, inadequate technology infrastructure, varying levels of student digital literacy, limited instructional time, large class sizes, and the dominance of exam-oriented curricula. These findings are consistent with existing research, which emphasizes that successful multimodal instruction requires a supportive environment, both in terms of policy and resources (Hafner, 2020; Nguyen, 2020).

This study contributes to the growing literature on multimodal pedagogy in the EFL context by providing empirical insights from Vietnamese higher education. The study highlights the importance of moving beyond isolated activities towards more comprehensive, well-supported multimodal integration into curriculum design, teacher training, and educational policy. As digital and multimodal literacy become increasingly important for communication, equipping educators with the necessary knowledge, tools, and institutional support will be crucial to fostering 21st-century writing pedagogy.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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