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Explainer Video Creation as a Medium for Academic English Development Among Screenagers

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A B S T R A C T

In the digital era, screenagers learners immersed in technology prefer interactive and visually engaging learning approaches. This study examines the use of explainer video creation as a medium for developing academic English skills, particularly writing, speaking, and critical thinking. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study involved 78 second-semester university students enrolled in an Academic English course who completed an explainer video project. Data were collected through video content analysis and open-ended student perception surveys. The study aimed to: (1) investigate how explainer video creation supports academic English development and (2) explore students' perceptions and challenges during the video creation process. The findings indicate improvement in academic vocabulary use, coherence, pronunciation, and learner engagement. Students reported increased motivation and confidence, as the task required planning, scripting, rehearsing, and revising language output. However, challenges related to technical issues, time management, and collaboration were also identified. Overall, the study highlights the pedagogical potential of student-generated explainer videos in Academic English instruction and suggests that clear rubrics, technical guidance, and structured timelines are essential for maximizing learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Explainer Videos, Screenagers, Academic English, Digital Learning, Video-Based Learning, Language Acquisition*

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed how today's young learners access, process, and communicate information. Growing up in an environment dominated by smartphones, laptops, social media applications, video platforms, and interactive online tools, these learners often referred to as *screenagers* develop learning habits that are distinctly shaped by their digital surroundings (Lai, 2021). Screenagers tend to engage more readily with visually rich, interactive, and technology-driven content while showing reduced interest in conventional, text heavy instructional approaches. This shift presents significant pedagogical implications for higher education, including the teaching of Academic English, where traditional methods often remain dominant.

Academic English requires students to demonstrate proficiency in formal writing, structured speaking, logical reasoning, and critical analysis. However, many Academic English classrooms continue to rely on printed texts, teacher-centered explanations, and standardized assessments that may not align with screenagers' digital learning preferences. As a result, learners often experience decreased motivation, limited immersion, and lower performance when academic tasks feel disconnected from their everyday digital practices (Jewitt, 2020). These challenges underscore the need for innovative, learner-centered, and technology-integrated pedagogies that resonate with contemporary learners' cognitive styles and communicative habits.

From a Multimedia Learning Theory perspective, Mayer's theory posits that learners understand information more effectively when it is presented through a combination of verbal and visual channels rather than through text alone (Mayer, 2020). The theory emphasizes key principles such as dual-channel processing, limited cognitive capacity, and active learning, suggesting that well-designed multimedia materials can reduce cognitive overload and enhance meaningful learning. In the context of Academic English, multimedia-based tasks such as explainer video creation allow learners to process language input through narration, visuals, and textual cues simultaneously, facilitating deeper comprehension and retention of academic content.

In addition, the increasing emphasis on multimodal literacy provides new opportunities to enhance Academic English instruction. Multimodal learning theory argues that meaning is constructed not solely through written or spoken language but through the integration of visual, auditory, spatial, and digital modes (Hafner, 2021). When learners engage in multimodal tasks, they are encouraged to think critically, design content intentionally, and communicate ideas using multiple semiotic resources. Such practices are particularly relevant for screenagers, who routinely interpret and produce meaning through videos, images, captions, and sound in their daily digital interactions. Multimodal learning thus bridges students' informal digital practices with formal academic literacy demands.

Among emerging multimodal tools, explainer videos have gained widespread attention due to their ability to simplify complex information using a combination of narration, graphics, animation, text, and sound (Mahapatra, 2021). While explainer videos are commonly used as teacher-created instructional materials, an important pedagogical shift has emerged from *watching* explainer videos to *creating* them. Student-generated explainer videos require learners to actively construct knowledge by transforming academic concepts into clear, audience-oriented explanations. This process aligns strongly with Constructivist Learning Theory**,** which emphasizes that learning occurs most effectively when learners actively engage in meaning-making rather than passively receiving information (Fosnot, 2013).

From a constructivist perspective, explainer video creation functions as an authentic, project-based learning task in which students plan, experiment, revise, and reflect. When producing explainer videos, students must select essential content, structure ideas logically, write clear and concise scripts, rehearse pronunciation, record narration, and edit audiovisual elements. Each stage mirrors core academic literacy practices. Scriptwriting supports coherence, cohesion, and accurate vocabulary use central components of academic writing while narration promotes oral fluency, stress, intonation, and clarity. Designing visual components further enhances conceptual organization and higher-order thinking, as learners must evaluate how best to communicate ideas to a target audience (Rahimi & Fathi, 2021). The iterative nature of video production encourages self-regulation, reflection, and problem-solving, all of which are fundamental to constructivist learning.

Moreover, explainer video creation contributes significantly to the development of digital literacy**,** defined as the ability to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital technologies. In academic and professional contexts, digital literacy increasingly includes multimodal communication skills such as video editing, visual design, and online content production (Zhang & Zou, 2023). By engaging in explainer video projects, students learn to use digital tools purposefully while maintaining academic rigor. This integration of language learning and digital literacy is particularly effective for screenagers, who are already familiar with video-based platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram Reels, and Canva. Aligning academic tasks with these familiar platforms can increase engagement, relevance, and motivation. Empirical evidence supports this alignment, showing that learner-generated digital content enhances ownership, confidence, and self-efficacy in language learning (Amalia & Pratiwi, 2023).

Despite its pedagogical potential, the use of student-generated explainer videos in English language education particularly in Academic English courses remains underexplored, especially in the Indonesian higher education context. While some universities have adopted blended and digital learning approaches, Academic English instruction still predominantly

emphasizes text-based assignments such as essays, summaries, and oral presentations (Setiawan & Irawan, 2022). Video production tasks are rarely embedded in curricular design, and empirical studies examining their impact on academic writing, speaking, and critical thinking remain limited. Existing research tends to focus on teacher-produced videos or students' passive consumption of video materials rather than on learner-generated multimedia production.

Another gap in the literature concerns learners' perceptions and challenges. Although screenagers are skilled digital consumers, producing academically oriented explainer videos demands higher levels of planning, discipline, and collaboration than creating informal social media content. Students must balance creativity with academic accuracy, manage technical tools, and work effectively in groups. Common challenges include unfamiliarity with editing software, difficulty organizing academic content, time constraints, and unequal group participation (Lestari & Widodo, 2021). Understanding these challenges is essential for designing instructional scaffolding and support mechanisms that ensure successful learning outcomes.

Given these gaps, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of explainer video creation as a learning medium for Academic English development among second semester university screenagers. Employing a qualitative research design, the study explores learners' academic performance, perceptions, and experiences throughout the video creation process. Specifically, it examines how this multimodal activity influences the development of writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills through video content analysis and student surveys.

The theoretical foundation of this study integrates Multimedia Learning Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and digital literacy within multimodal learning. Multimedia Learning Theory explains how combining verbal and visual modes supports cognitive processing; constructivism frames learners as active knowledge constructors through authentic tasks; and digital literacy highlights the importance of multimodal communication skills in contemporary academic contexts. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the pedagogical value of explainer video creation in Academic English instruction. Based on this framework, the study addresses the following objectives:

To explore students' perceptions of explainer video creation in Academic English learning.
To identify the challenges students encounter during the explainer video creation process.

By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the growing body of research on digital and multimodal learning strategies in English language education and offers practical insights for educators, instructional designers, and policymakers seeking innovative ways to integrate multimedia production into Academic English curricula in higher education.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method to investigate how explainer video creation supports the development of academic English skills among screenager learners. A descriptive qualitative design enables researchers to explore natural learning behaviors and student-generated products without manipulating variables, making it suitable for capturing authentic experiences and language performance (Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method focuses on describing and interpreting participants' responses, perceptions, and artifacts in depth.

Respondents

The respondents consisted of 78 second semester university students enrolled in an Academic English course at a Universitas Pendidikan Nasional, Bali. These students represented the *screenager* demographic digital-native learners who regularly use smartphones, multimedia platforms, and online tools (Lai, 2021; Palfrey & Gasser, 2016). Their English proficiency ranged from basic to intermediate. A purposive sampling technique was

used to select participants who were directly involved in the explainer video project, following qualitative sampling principles that prioritize relevance over representativeness (Palinkas et al., 2015). All respondents participated voluntarily and provided informed consent for the use of their videos and survey responses.

The study was conducted over a four-month period. Data collection began in March 2025 and continued until May 2025, spanning approximately 2 months. During this phase, data were gathered through the implementation of the explainer video project, video content analysis, and the administration of student perception surveys. The remaining two months were devoted to data organization, coding, thematic analysis, and interpretation of findings. Overall, the 4-month research timeline allowed sufficient time for iterative data analysis, triangulation of findings, and careful interpretation, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative results.

Instruments

Two main instruments were used to collect qualitative data:

Video Content Analysis Sheet

The primary instrument was a researcher-developed analysis sheet used to examine students' explainer videos. The analysis focused on features related to academic English performance, including vocabulary accuracy, coherence, conceptual clarity, pronunciation, fluency, and multimodal integration (Hafner, 2021; Zhang & Zou, 2023). This instrument allowed systematic identification of linguistic patterns and communication strategies demonstrated in the videos.

Student Perception Survey

A descriptive qualitative survey with open-ended questions was used to collect students' reflections on their learning experience. Open-ended surveys are effective tools in qualitative inquiry because they provide opportunities for students to express their thoughts, feelings, and challenges in their own words (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The survey explored perceptions related to motivation, confidence, difficulties, and perceived improvement.

Procedures

The research was conducted over an eight-week learning cycle**,** during which the explainer video project was integrated into the Academic English coursework.

Orientation and Introduction

Students were introduced to the concept, structure, and purpose of explainer videos. The lecturer provided examples and explained important elements such as scriptwriting, narration quality, and visual-semantic coherence. This aligns with scaffolding principles in digital learning that emphasize clear modelling prior to production (Chen & Chan, 2021).

Topic Selection and Script Development

Students selected academic topics relevant to their course materials. They then wrote scripts containing explanations, arguments, and key points. Scriptwriting was essential for evaluating academic writing skills and aligns with previous findings that writing-to-learn activities enhance linguistic accuracy and coherence (Hyland, 2022).

Video Creation

Students created their videos using tools such as Canva, CapCut, and PowerPoint. This stage included recording narration, editing visual elements, and revising sequences. Video creation is known to foster multimodal literacy, creativity, and deeper conceptual engagement (Hafner & Miller, 2020; Amalia & Pratiwi, 2023).

Submission of Videos

Completed videos, scripts, and short written reflections were submitted through the university's digital learning platform.

Survey Administration

After submission, students completed the qualitative survey to express their perceptions, challenges, and insights. Survey responses supported triangulation, strengthening the credibility of qualitative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach following thematic analysis steps adapted from Braun and Clarke (2021).

Data Reduction

Relevant data from video analyses and survey responses were sorted, organized, and reduced to manageable categories. This step focused on identifying linguistic features and student perceptions significant to the research questions.

Data Display

The reduced data were presented in descriptive summaries and thematic categories. Data display helps researchers visualize recurring patterns and relationships within qualitative datasets (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Conclusion Drawing and Interpretation

Themes were interpreted to describe how explainer video creation influenced academic English development among screenagers. Conclusions were drawn by connecting thematic patterns with theoretical perspectives on multimodal literacy, digital learning, and academic language development (Lim & Chan, 2022; He & Ju, 2022).

By combining video artifact analysis and student reflections, the descriptive qualitative method provided a rich and holistic understanding of learners' experiences throughout the explainer video creation process.

Table 1 Explainer Video Analysis Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
1. Academic Vocabulary Use	Uses a wide range of appropriate academic vocabulary accurately and effectively; terminology is precise and contextually appropriate	Uses adequate academic vocabulary with minor inaccuracies; meaning remains clear	Limited range of academic vocabulary; some inappropriate or repetitive word choices	Very limited or incorrect academic vocabulary; frequent misuse affects clarity
2. Coherence and Organization	Ideas are logically structured; clear introduction, development, and conclusion; smooth transitions throughout	Organization is mostly logical; minor issues with flow or transitions	Ideas are partially organized; transitions are unclear or inconsistent	Ideas are poorly organized; lack of logical sequence and coherence
3. Pronunciation and Fluency	Pronunciation is clear and accurate; speech is fluent with natural pacing and intonation	Generally clear pronunciation; occasional hesitation or minor pronunciation issues	Noticeable pronunciation problems; frequent pauses affect fluency	Pronunciation is unclear; frequent errors significantly hinder comprehension
4. Content Accuracy and Critical Thinking	Content is accurate, well-explained, and demonstrates critical thinking and conceptual understanding	Content is mostly accurate; explanations are clear but somewhat descriptive	Some inaccuracies or superficial explanations; limited critical engagement	Content is inaccurate or unclear; lacks explanation and critical thinking
5. Multimodal Integration (Visual–Audio Alignment)	Visuals, text, and narration are well-integrated; multimedia elements strongly support meaning	Multimedia elements generally support the message; minor mismatches	Limited alignment between visuals and narration; some elements are distracting	Poor or minimal use of visuals; multimedia elements do not support understanding
6. Overall Communicative Effectiveness	Message is clear, engaging, and appropriate for an academic audience	Message is mostly clear and understandable; engagement is moderate	Message is partially clear; engagement is limited	Message is unclear and difficult to follow

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the findings derived from video content analysis and students' qualitative survey responses. The data were analyzed descriptively following Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic approach, producing three major themes aligned with the research objectives: (1) students' perceptions of explainer video creation, and (2) challenges encountered during the project.

Students' Perceptions of the Explainer Video Project

The second major theme concerns students' perceptions, which were overwhelmingly positive. Three subthemes emerged: increased motivation, improved confidence, and perceived relevance to real-world communication.

Increased Motivation to Learn Academic English

Most students expressed that the project made learning more enjoyable and meaningful. They described the activity as "fun," "challenging in a good way," and "different from usual writing tasks." Digital tools familiar to students Canva, CapCut, PowerPoint enhanced their engagement.

This reflects Chen and Chan's (2021) argument that integrating familiar digital platforms into academic tasks increases learner motivation and reduces anxiety. The combination of creativity and academic explanation seemed to resonate with the natural digital habits of screenagers, reinforcing the idea that student-generated content fosters intrinsic motivation (Hafner, 2021).

Improved Confidence in Speaking and Writing

Many respondents noted that creating the video boosted their confidence, particularly in speaking English. Because students could script, practice, and revise, they felt more comfortable hearing their own voices and articulating ideas clearly.

Increased confidence is consistent with multimodal learning theories, which assert that digital production tasks give learners "low-stakes environments" to rehearse and refine language (Lim & Chan, 2022). Students also felt more confident in academic writing because the script served as a structured guide.

Perceived Relevance for Future Academic and Professional Settings

Students recognized the relevance of explainer video creation beyond the English classroom. Several respondents mentioned that the skill would be useful for academic presentations, internship tasks, digital communication, and workplace demands. As digital literacy becomes essential in higher education and employment, learners saw the assignment as preparing them for real-world communication (He & Ju, 2022).

This perception aligns with arguments that multimodal production enhances 21st-century competencies, including communication, creativity, and problem-solving (Fullan, 2021). Students viewed the explainer video project not only as an academic task but also as a practical life skill.

Challenges Encountered During the Video Creation Process

Although students reported many benefits, they also faced challenges. Three subthemes emerged: technical difficulties, time management issues, and collaborative problems.

Technical Difficulties

Some students struggled with video-editing software, audio quality, and file export issues. Limited access to high-quality microphones or stable internet also posed challenges. These findings mirror Lestari and Widodo (2021), who note that technological barriers are common in multimodal assignments.

However, students indicated that the technical challenges, while frustrating, contributed to learning new digital skills. This aligns with constructivist perspectives that emphasize learning through problem-solving (Fosnot, 2013).

Time Constraints and Workload

The process of scripting, recording, editing, and revising required considerable time. Students juggling other coursework found the project demanding. Some reported spending more time than expected revising narration and adding visual elements.

This aligns with previous research indicating that multimodal projects require significant cognitive and time investment (Hafner & Miller, 2020). Despite this, students generally agreed that the time invested was meaningful and contributed directly to skill development.

Collaboration Issues

For students who worked in pairs or groups, coordinating tasks and ensuring equal contribution were challenging. Some reported differences in digital skills among group members, leading to unequal distribution of responsibilities.

Collaboration challenges are well-documented in project-based learning literature, particularly when digital tasks are involved (Rahimi & Fathi, 2021). These issues highlight the need for clearer guidelines and role allocation in future implementations.

Discussion

The present study investigated the effectiveness of explainer video creation as a learning medium for developing Academic English among screenager learners. The findings indicate that student-generated explainer videos contribute positively to learners' writing, speaking, and multimodal literacy, confirming the pedagogical value of multimodal production tasks in higher education English instruction. This section discusses these findings in relation to existing theories and prior research, highlighting their implications for Academic English pedagogy.

Explainer Video Creation and Academic English Development

The improvement observed in students' academic writing and speaking skills suggests that explainer video creation promotes deeper cognitive engagement than traditional, text-based assignments. Through scripting, narrating, and revising their videos, learners were required to actively organize ideas, apply academic vocabulary, and maintain coherence and clarity—core components of Academic English. This finding supports Hafner's (2021) argument that multimodal composing creates authentic learning environments in which language skills are integrated with digital communication practices rather than treated as isolated competencies.

From a theoretical perspective, this outcome aligns with constructivist learning principles, which emphasize that knowledge is constructed through active engagement and reflection. Explainer video creation positioned students as producers of knowledge rather than passive recipients, encouraging them to interpret content, make design decisions, and refine explanations for a target audience. The iterative nature of video production further reinforced learning through self-monitoring and revision, processes known to strengthen conceptual understanding and language accuracy.

Multimodal Literacy and Cognitive Engagement

The findings also reveal that explainer video creation enhanced students' multimodal literacy. Learners demonstrated increasing awareness of how visual, auditory, and textual elements interact to convey meaning effectively. This supports multimodal learning theory, which argues that meaning-making extends beyond linguistic modes and involves the orchestration of multiple semiotic resources. By engaging in multimodal design, students practiced higher-order thinking skills such as selecting relevant information, organizing content hierarchically, and evaluating communicative effectiveness.

These results reinforce the view that multimodal tasks are particularly suitable for screenagers, whose everyday communication practices already involve complex combinations of visuals, sound, and text. When such practices are purposefully integrated into academic contexts, learners are more likely to engage deeply with content while simultaneously developing academic and digital literacies.

Learner Motivation and Affective Outcomes

Students' positive perceptions of the explainer video project highlight the motivational benefits of integrating familiar digital tools into Academic English instruction. Consistent with Lai (2021), the use of platforms such as Canva and CapCut aligned with screenagers' learning preferences and reduced resistance to academic tasks. Students described the activity as

enjoyable, meaningful, and relevant, indicating that the project successfully bridged the gap between academic learning and learners' digital lives.

Importantly, the findings also indicate that explainer video creation strengthened learners' confidence in using English, particularly in speaking. The ability to rehearse and re-record narration created a low-anxiety environment that allowed students to refine their oral performance without the pressure of live presentations. Confidence is a critical affective factor in second language acquisition, and increased self-efficacy can positively influence learners' willingness to communicate and persist in challenging academic tasks. Thus, the explainer video project not only supported cognitive and linguistic development but also addressed affective dimensions of language learning.

Challenges and the Need for Instructional Scaffolding

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified challenges related to technology use, time management, and collaboration. Technical difficulties and limited familiarity with video-editing tools occasionally hindered students' progress, while time constraints added to the perceived workload. Group-based projects also introduced collaboration issues, such as unequal participation and varying levels of digital competence among students.

These challenges underscore the importance of instructional scaffolding in multimodal learning environments. In line with Chen and Chan (2021), the findings suggest that structured technical guidance, clear assessment rubrics, and explicit expectations for group roles can reduce student frustration and improve learning outcomes. Providing preliminary workshops on video-editing tools and offering exemplars of high-quality explainer videos may further support learners in navigating the technical and academic demands of the task.

Pedagogical Implications

Overall, the discussion affirms that explainer video creation is not merely a creative or supplementary activity but a pedagogically grounded approach that integrates language learning, cognitive engagement, and digital literacy. When embedded thoughtfully within Academic English coursework, explainer video projects can foster meaningful learning experiences that align with screenagers' digital habits while maintaining academic rigor.

For educators, these findings suggest the need to rethink traditional Academic English assignments by incorporating multimodal production tasks that reflect contemporary communication practices. For curriculum designers and policymakers, the study highlights the importance of integrating digital literacy and multimodal competencies into higher education language curricula. By doing so, institutions can better prepare students for academic and professional contexts that increasingly demand sophisticated, multimodal communication skills.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how explainer video creation functions as an instructional medium for developing Academic English among second-semester university screenagers, drawing on qualitative evidence from video artifact analysis and learner reflections. The findings indicate that engaging students in explainer video production contributes meaningfully to the development of academic language skills and multimodal competence, as students demonstrated progress in academic vocabulary use, logical organization of ideas, clarity of explanation, oral fluency, and confidence in spoken English. Script development required learners to critically refine content and apply formal language conventions, while narration and editing fostered repeated rehearsal, self-evaluation, and greater awareness of multimodal communication through the integration of visuals, animations, and text. Learner responses further revealed enhanced motivation and engagement, with students perceiving the task as enjoyable, relevant, and reflective of real-world digital communication practices, as well as valuable for future academic, professional, and presentation contexts. Overall, the study suggests that explainer video creation represents a pedagogically sound approach to Academic English instruction by aligning with students' digital habits and promoting active, multimodal learning that supports deeper cognitive processing and the integration of

language, digital literacy, and 21st-century communication skills; however, further research employing mixed-methods or experimental designs and longitudinal approaches is recommended to strengthen causal claims and examine the sustainability and transferability of learning outcomes over time.

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