

---

## IMPROVING EFL LEARNERS LANGUAGE WRITTEN PRODUCTION USING SUBTITLED VIDEOS

Lasim Muzammil

Kanjuruhan University of Malang, Indonesia

Phone (+62) 81334602735 e-mail: lasim.muzammil@gmail.com

**Abstract** English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners tend to produce their speech or written production as they are associated with what they see and what they hear. So, they are able and desired to give comment spontaneously after watching and listening to them. Producing written language can, as a matter of fact, be detected from learners' fluency, accuracy and complexity. This article endeavors to elaborate written language production done by university students by using English subtitled videos. Two intact groups were assigned to accomplish two different tasks; that is, one group watched the video with subtitle and the other one without subtitle. The result of the study reveals that learners who carry out the tasks of watching video with subtitle improve their ability in written production in terms of fluency and accuracy regardless to complexity.

**Keywords:** written language production, fluency, accuracy, complexity, subtitled video.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are required to master writing an essay, especially scientific writing for university level. This is because they have to be able to finish their study soon after finishing their scientific writing in the form of thesis. Otherwise, university learners will get obstacles to finish their study based on the time planned; that is, for four years in general. This type of problem can be anticipated by learning to write essay from the

beginning till the ability is obtained satisfactorily.

The learners' ability to write an essay can be improved from time to time after having sufficient drills—starting from writing a title, a sentence, a paragraph, to determining the topic sentence, unity, and coherence—from semester two to the following semesters. Problems of coming up with idea in writing an essay are inevitable if learners are not associated with something they are interested in, particularly with what they see and what they hear.

Watching English video program with subtitle can actually motivate learners to respond to have either written or speech production spontaneously.

The fourth semester of university learners might still have problems to write an essay related to complexity, accuracy, and fluency even though they have already obtained knowledge of writing an essay at the previous semesters. More specifically, learners still have difficulties to write complex sentences especially when they have to use independent and dependent clause. Also, how accurate and how fluent sentences are produced still problem for learners of a foreign language at the university.

Krashen (1985) states that learners can learn a large amount of language unconsciously through ample comprehensible input. The use of the target language in real communicative environment and the stress on rich comprehensible input by exposing the learners to the target language in the classroom, facilitate their language acquisition. Therefore, by watching the video with subtitle, learners are not only able to understand the story exposed in the scene but comprehend some words

related to the scene they have watched as well.

Skehan (1998) states that language production is distinguished by three dimensions; that is, fluency, accuracy, and complexity. In cognitive approach, Skehan (1998) distinguishes between exemplar-based and a rule-based system. The exemplar-based system includes discrete lexical items as well as ready-made formulaic chunks of language, while the rule-based system is made up of abstract representations of the underlying pattern of the language. If language users, for example, focus on producing a more fluent language and drawing on their exemplar-based system, their production will be less accurate and less complex. Therefore, they must prioritize where to allocate their attention; fluency, or accuracy and complexity.

Skehan & Foster's (1999: 96–97) definitions of fluency, accuracy, and complexity can be elaborated as follows. *Fluency* is defined as the capacity to use language in real time, to emphasize meanings, possibly drawing on more lexicalized systems. *Accuracy* is the ability to avoid error in performance, possibly

reflecting higher levels of control in the language as well as a conservative orientation, that is, avoidance of challenging structures that might provoke error. *Complexity* is defined as the capacity to use more advanced language, with the possibility that such language may not be controlled so effectively. This may also involve a greater willingness to take risks, and use fewer controlled language subsystems. This area is also taken to correlate with a greater likelihood of restructuring, that is, change and development in the inter-language system.

Different from Skehan, Robinson (2001) drawing on more work in psychology concluded that human attention is not limited, and that learners are able to attend to more than one aspect of language simultaneously. According to this point of view, the structural and functional complexities are connected rather than competing with each other. Therefore, fluency, accuracy, and complexity may go along with each other without being competed and they have not to be prioritized.

Based on learners' problems in language production related to fluency accuracy, and complexity,

the objective of this research is to investigate whether watching videos with subtitle have better written performance than those watching videos without subtitle.

## **METHOD**

*Participants* in this study are taken from two intact classes, seventy EFL learners in the fourth semester majoring English Language Education at Kanjuruhan university of Malang. The rationale behind choosing these particular learners to be the subjects of this study is that they have already obtained knowledge of writing an essay in the previous semesters; that is, *Writing One* in the second semester and *Writing Two* in the third semester. Thirty five (35) EFL learners become experimental group and the other thirty five (35) become control group. Pre-test is assigned to both groups, experimental group and control group, and it is done in order to get to know the homogeneity of the group. Post-test is done, in the form of *Essay Writing Task*, right after EFL learners see the video.

*Essay Writing Task* is a task that should be done by learners to write down an essay after watching video so that the researcher can see

the effect of captions shown in the video. The video is a short time commercial one, approximately one minutes shown, downloaded from You Tube and is turned on three times before writing the essay so that learners have opportunity to think and decide what to write about the content of video. Both experimental and control groups are assigned to write an essay after watching the video. For those who belong to experimental group will see the video with subtitles and those who belong to control group will see the video without subtitles and the result of the essay task will be compared for the sake of data analysis.

The data were collected during the normal session of writing class. The researcher provided the subject of the study with time to write the essay for twenty minutes. The idea of limiting the time was that it was going to be useful to measure the learners' fluency in writing the essay. To measure *fluency* (Number of Words per Minute), the researcher uses Skehan and Foster' (1999) way; that is, fluency was achieved by calculating the number of words per minute. To measure *accuracy* (Error-free T-

units), the number of error-free T-unit is divided by the total number of T-unit which as used by Arent (2003) and Storch (2009). All the main clauses plus subordinated clauses attached to or embedded in them were counted as T-units. Only those T-units that contain no grammatical error, syntactic, lexical, or spelling errors were counted as error-free T-unit. To measure *complexity* (Lexical Density), the researcher used Rahimpour's (2008) way; that is, the number of lexical, or 'open class', words in a text (full verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs ending in -ly) divided by total words multiplied by 100.

The data collection were analyzed by means of statistical program (SPSS) and ANOVA was used to know different performance between experimental and control groups. This ANOVA performs all the measures of accuracy, fluency, and complexity for watching video with subtitle (experimental) essay and without subtitle (control) one.

## **FINDINGS**

As it was said in the previous section of this article regarding the measurement of fluency, accuracy, and complexity of the learners'

written production, the researcher adopted a theory of measuring language production from some authors who had carried out the previous study about similar topics. *Fluency* was measured by calculating the number of words per minute (Skehan & Foster, 1999), while *accuracy* was measured from the number of error-free T-unit divided by the total number of T-unit (Arent, 2003; Storch, 2009), and *complexity* was derived from dividing the number of lexical words by the total number of words multiplied by 100 (Rahimpour, 2008). The raw score of the participants were analyzed by using the computer software (SPSS). Afterwards, One-Way ANOVA for descriptive and inferential statistics was used to measure fluency, accuracy, and complexity of the learners' language written production.

Table 1. showed the result of the statistical analysis for *fluency*, *accuracy*, and *complexity*. For *fluency*, it revealed that the coefficient correlation between experimental and control groups were statistically significant at .05 significant level or 95% confidence (.000 <.05) and the mean of experimental group is

greater than the mean of control group ( $11.7329 > 9.1400$ ) which means that watching video with subtitles (experimental) before doing the task lead the EFL learners to produce more fluent essay then watching video without subtitles (control). In this case, EFL learners could recall their memory while writing an essay not only from the sequence of the story exposed in the funny commercial video but the use of captions or video with subtitles which had a beneficial effect on thier remembering as well.

For *accuracy*, it revealed that the coefficient correlation between experimental and control groups were statistically significant at .05 significant level or 95% confidence (.000 <.05) and the mean of experimental group is greater than the mean of control group (.6043 > .4906) which means that watching video with subtitles (experimental) before doing the task lead the EFL learners to produce more accurate essay then watching video without subtitles (control). In this case, the use of captions or video with subtitles had a beneficial effect on recalling learners' memory to what they saw while writing their essay.

For *complexity*, it revealed that the coefficient correlation between experimental and control groups were statistically significant at .05 significant level or 95% confidence ( $.000 < .05$ ) and the mean of experimental group is lower than the mean of control group ( $51.1097 < 57.3320$ ) which means that watching video with

subtitles (experimental) before doing the task lead the EFL learners to produce less complex essay than watching video without subtitles (control). In this case, the use of captions or video with subtitles had a beneficial effect on recalling learners' memory to what they saw while writing their essay.

**Table 1. Comparisons of Means in terms of Fluency, Accuracy, and Complexity**

No.	Variable	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.*
1.	Fluency	Experimental	35	11.7329	.59717	239.001	.000
		Control	35	9.1400	.79241		
2.	Accuracy	Experimental	35	.6043	.12089	13.545	.000
		Control	35	.4906	.13711		
3.	Complexity	Experimental	35	51.1097	2.00473	100.017	.000
		Control	35	57.3320	3.08701		

*\* Significant was set at .05 level.*

The information of the mean differences between Experimental and Control Groups in terms of

fluency, accuracy, and complexity can be seen from Table 1 above and more clearly from Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 as follows.

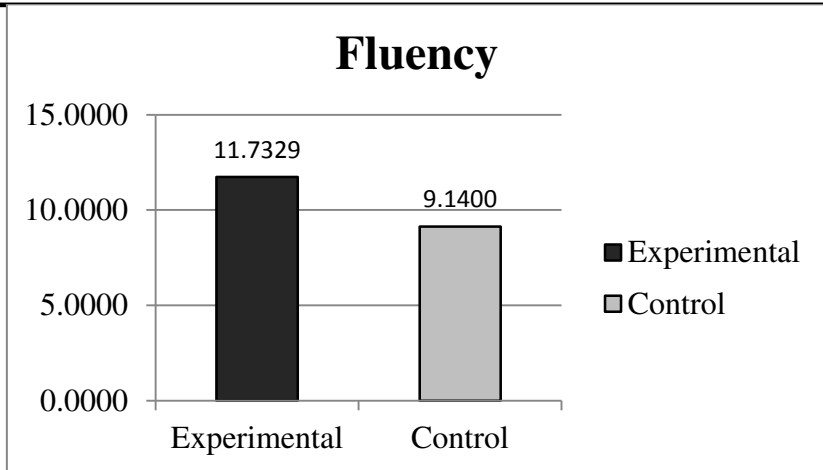


Figure 1. Mean Differences in Fluency between Experimental and Control Group

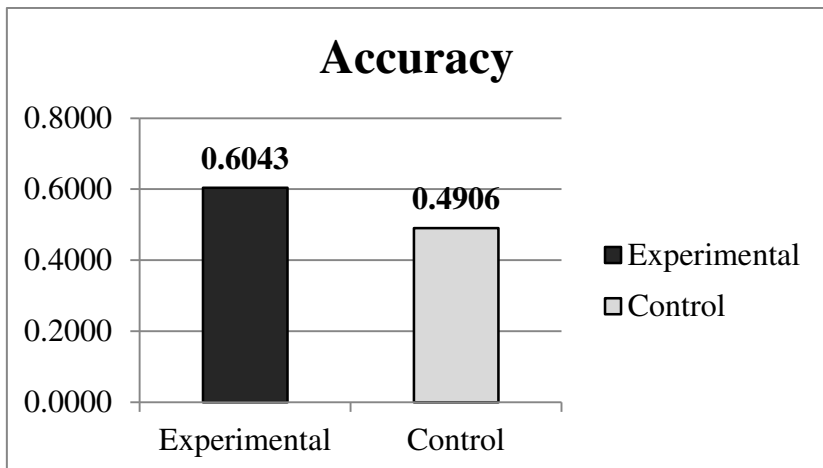


Figure 2. Mean Differences in Accuracy between Experimental and Control Group

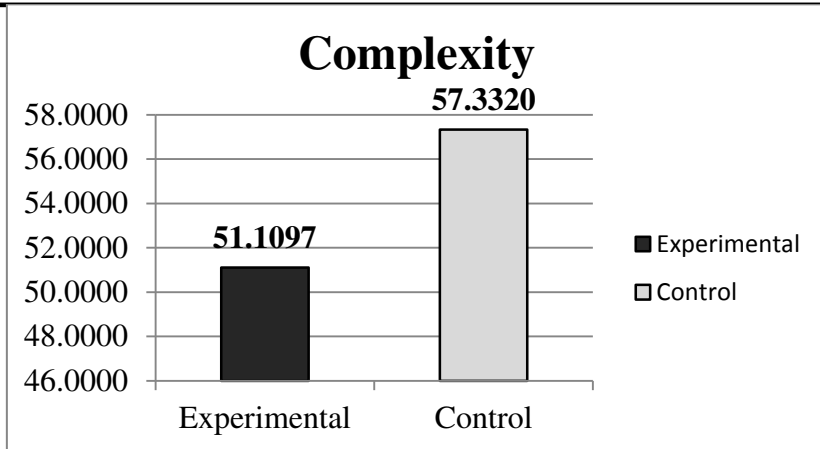


Figure 3. Mean Differences in Complexity between Experimental and Control Group

Figures 1 and 2 showed that the experimental group performed more fluent and more accurate essay than the control one. It means that EFL learners in the experimental group write essay better than in the control one in terms of fluency and accuracy. So, the video with subtitle watched by the learners affect thier fluency and accuracy. Yet, Figure 3 showed that the experimental group performed less complexity than the control one. It means that EFL learners in experimental group write less complex essay than in the control one indicating that their writing are worse than the control group's writing production because they could not use more advanced language as

their language capacity. So, watching video with subtitle does not affect thier so-called advanced writing production in terms of complexity.

### DISCUSSION

After observing Table 1 and Figures 1, 2, 3 from the finding discussed earlier from this research, it can be claimed that all measures of fluency, accuracy, and complexity for EFL learners written production are statistically significant at .05 level of significance. The difference is that learners produce their written production more fluently and more accurately after watching video with subtitled ( $11.7329 > 9.1400$ ,  $.6043 > .4906$ ). In other words,



experimental group outperformed 2.5929 greater than the control one in terms of fluency. Next, in terms of accuracy experimental group performed 0.1137 better than the control one. It was indicated that the help of L2 subtitle (English) make learners produced their written English not only faster but more accurate as well.

Even though the experimental and control groups are significantly different in all three aspects of language written production (fluency, accuracy, and complexity), EFL learners still could not produce more complex sentences and more lexical items and they still made many mistakes in choices of words, verb, adjectives, and noun phrases. For example, learners' mistakes in choosing appropriate verbs in sentences like "At the first time he always failed and filed," "But then, when he grown up, he started to be a good learner," "He had already finished and understand more about Kungfu" and "After they drunk together the old master asked him to made a sign on his forehead." EFL learners, in this case, might made mistakes to choose these correct verbs since they had to write the essay in a limited time; that is, twenty

minutes task accomplishment, or they did not remember the pattern of irregular verbs.

This factor of complexity was sacrificed by the other factors—fluency and accuracy. This is in line with Skehan's (1998) theory of *Cognition Hypothesis* stating that learners must prioritize where to allocate their attention; fluency, or accuracy and complexity. Furthermore, Skehan (2001) believes that humans have limited attentional resources and trade-off always occur between fluency, accuracy, and complexity and it is not possible to achieve these aspects of performance simultaneously when one is using a language. Therefore, learners in recent study tend to prioritize their attention to both fluency and accuracy regardless to complexity.

Since learners in this study, experimental group, could not produce better all three language dimensions than the control one (only fluency and accuracy), Robinson' (2001) theory that works on psychology and states that human' attention is not limited and that learners are able to attend to more than one aspect of language simultaneously could not be claimed to be true in this case.

Therefore, according to his point of view, the structural and functional complexities are connected rather than separating with each other and fluency, accuracy, and complexity may go along with each other without being separated and they have not been prioritized could be true for some other cases—not in this study.

In addition, the current study is also in line with Krashen's (1985) statement arguing that learners can learn a large amount of language unconsciously through ample comprehensible input. Learners' cognition in the story of the video using L2 (English) subtitle become a comprehensible input that facilitate their language acquisition. Therefore, by watching the video with subtitle, learners are not only able to understand the story exposed in the scene but comprehend some words related to the scene they have watched as well.

### **CONCLUSION**

The present study was to examine the improving of EFL learners language written production using subtitled videos applied to two different groups of participants—experimental and

control groups—on fluency, accuracy, and complexity. This study could be beneficial for language learners, language users, and teachers in the field of writing skill used for EFL learners. The findings, on the one hand, show that learners on experimental group (watching video with subtitle before doing the task) performed significantly better than those of control group (watching video without subtitle before doing the task) in terms of fluency and accuracy. Therefore, the capacity to use language in real time, to emphasize meanings, possibly drawing on more lexicalized systems and ability to avoid error in performance, possibly reflecting higher levels of control in the language as well as a conservative orientation, that is, avoidance of challenging structures that might provoke error could be practiced by EFL learners. On the other hand, the experimental group failed to improve their complexity in producing their essay so that it could be claimed that the capacity to use more advanced language or more complex essay cannot be fulfilled satisfactorily. In short, learners in this study prioritize the two language dimensions—fluency

and accuracy regardless to complexity.

Language users should be aware that producing written language can be highly motivated after watching short commercial videos downloaded from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Therefore, language users are recommended to choose any commercial videos they like and practice writing an essay right after watching the videos in order to improve their ability to write an English essay. For practical implication, teachers

are recommended to emphasize the learners' goal in writing their essay whether or not they want to stress on particular language production—fluency, accuracy, or complexity. If teachers focus on the learners' written production on fluency and accuracy, it is recommended to use video with subtitles and if they only focus on learners' written production on complexity, the use of video without subtitle is recommended.

## References:

- Arent, R. (2003). Promoting Revision and Development in L2 Writing through a Combination-Based Curriculum. *The Korean TESOL Journal*, 6(1), 1 – 26.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issue and Implication*. New York. Longman.
- Rahimpour, M. (2008). Implementation of Task-Based Approaches to Language Teaching. *Foreign Language Research*, 41, Special Issue, 45 – 61.
- Robinson, P. (2001). Task Complexity, Cognitive Resources, and Syllabus Design: A Triadig Framework fo Examining Task Influences on SLA. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and Second Language Instruction* (pp. 287-318). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skehan, P. (1998). *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Skehan, P. (2001). Tasks and language performance assessment. In M. Bygate, P. Skehan, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second language learning, teaching and testing* (pp. 167 - 185). London: Longman.
- Skehan, P., & Foster, P. (1999). The Influence of Task Structure and Processing Conditions on Narrative Retellings. *Language Learning*, 49/1, 93 – 120.
- Storch, N. (2009). The Impact of Studying in a Second Language Medium University and the Development of L2 Writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 103 – 118.