

Uncovering Students' Perceptions on Using Interactive Writing Tools

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The European Conference on Language Learning 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Selecting the right medium for teaching writing is an essential task. Increasingly, research on language instruction is focusing on the integration of various writing tools to enhance student engagement in writing. Despite numerous efforts to motivate students, writing remains a challenging task for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. This paper explores reimagining writing instruction and modifying current teaching approaches. Additionally, it reviews various digital tools and interactive strategies that could increase students' interest and participation in the writing process. The study investigates the impact of Canva, Google Docs, Mentimeter, Mind Maps, Poll Everywhere, Slido, Blogs, Padlet, and QR codes on improving student engagement in writing activities. In this context, the paper examines students' perceptions regarding using digital tools to create new writing experiences. According to the findings, incorporating interactive writing tools increased students' motivation, and encouraged them to write more. The study suggests that the integration of digital tools into writing instruction can enhance the overall learning experience by making it more interactive, personalized, and engaging. Moreover, students' writing skills were significantly enhanced. Consequently, a novel learning experience tends to create students' motivation, and boost their engagement, which could be done through implementing interactive digital tools in the classroom.

Keywords: Writing Skills, Engagement, Digital Tools, Interactive, Motivation

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Introduction

Many students struggle to express their ideas, interests, experiences, and feelings in written form. It is important to highlight that strong writing skills are crucial in the professional world, where effective and concise communication can significantly impact decision-making and collaboration (Rao & Durga, 2018). The National Commission on Writing (2004) emphasizes that writing is a critical skill for academic and professional success. Writing is considered a highly complex and mentally demanding activity. Similarly, Rena, Musarokah, and Priharyanti (2023) point out that “writing ability can be a challenging task for students. They often find it uninteresting as they struggle to express their ideas” (p.309). Teaching writing to English language learners (ELLs) involves several challenges, mainly due to linguistic differences. ELLs frequently have difficulties with grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, hindering their ability to clearly and accurately articulate their thoughts in writing. Moreover, ELLs often lack confidence in their writing skills, resulting in anxiety and hesitation to participate in writing activities fully.

It is crucial to change how teachers teach writing skills to meet the diverse needs of today’s students and to adapt to the evolving demands of the modern world. Using irrelevant teaching strategies is the primary reason for lacking writing skills (Abhari & Salehi, 2021; Mahmood, 2020). Traditional methods frequently emphasize rote learning and formulaic writing, which can hinder creativity and fail to captivate students. By shifting to more dynamic and student-centered approaches, teachers can nurture a deeper understanding and appreciation of writing. Incorporating technology, collaborative projects, and real-world writing tasks can make learning more relevant and engaging for students. Warschauer (2010) stated that “new digital media have played an important role in the teaching of writing, through both the cognitive era that began in the 1980s” (p.3). Providing personalized and constructive feedback using digital tools, rather than generic grading, helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a growth mindset. By implementing these changes, educators can create more engaging, inclusive, and effective writing classes that not only enhance writing skills but also contribute to overall academic and personal development.

This research examines the impact of integrating digital tools on students' engagement and motivation. Besides, it analyzes how various digital tools (e.g. Google Docs, Padlet, Canva) influence the development of students' writing skills, and investigates the perceptions of students regarding the use of digital tools in writing classes. Based on these objectives the following research questions have been formulated.

Research questions:

1. How does the integration of digital tools impact students' engagement and motivation in writing classes?
2. How do different digital tools (e.g. Google Docs, Padlet, Canva) influence the development of students' writing skills?
3. What are the perceptions of students regarding the use of digital tools in writing classes?

The Importance of Integrating Digital Tools in Writing Classes

Many educators and researchers have encouraged teachers to incorporate digital technologies into their teaching. However, there is increasing concern that teachers are not embracing these new technologies (Pearson & Somekh, 2006). Since the COVID-19 pandemic,

technology has revolutionized the education system, bringing about new methods of teaching and learning. Incorporating technology in writing classes provides numerous benefits that go beyond just enhancing engagement and improving skills. Technology provides numerous advantages, such as enhanced learning outcomes, instant feedback, greater student engagement as well as opportunities for personalized learning and self-directed (Memon et al., 2022). Puspitasari et al. (2021) suggest that with the rapid pace of technological advancement, teachers need to be flexible in incorporating technology as a teaching tool, despite some teachers being hesitant to integrate it into their instructional method. Traditional teaching methods have often been criticized for their lack of ability to engage students and encourage active participation in the learning process (Deslauriers et al., 2019).

As technology continues to reshape the education system, new tools and platforms that enhance learning are constantly emerging. Integrating digital tools into writing classes is essential because they make learning more interactive and engaging. Students are more likely to participate and stay motivated when they use technology that resonates with their everyday experiences. Research has shown that the use of technological tools is an effective resource for helping students improve their writing skills (Aghayani & Hajmohammadi, 2019; Sa'diyah & Cahyono, 2019; Somani & Rizvi, 2018). Besides, Purcell, Buchanan, and Friedrich (2013) note that “a survey of 2,462 Advanced Placement (AP) and National Writing Project (NWP) teachers finds that digital technologies are shaping student writing in myriad ways” (p.2). It is noteworthy to mention that in today’s digital world, proficiency in using technology is a key skill. By integrating digital tools in writing classes, educators are preparing students for future academic and professional environments where these skills are essential.

Canva	<p>Musarokah and Priharyanti (2023) assert that the quality of students' writing can be greatly enhanced by using Canva as a technological tool.</p> <p>Canva's features allow students to design visually appealing presentations, infographics, and digital stories, enhancing the engagement and impact of their writing projects.</p>
Padlet	<p>Padlet functions as a flexible digital platform where students can brainstorm, organize research materials, and share multimedia content for their writing projects (Wong & Yunus, 2020).</p> <p>Since interactive writing involves students in planning, revising, and editing a group text, Padlet helps create an organized, cooperative working environment where students can provide peer feedback (Clay, 2001; Jun, 2008).</p>
Google Docs	<p>Incorporating Google Docs as a teaching tool encourages active participation and the sharing of ideas among students (Deni & Zainal, 2018).</p> <p>Teachers can easily track students' progress and provide feedback.</p>

Blogs	<p>The researchers discovered that students have a positive attitude toward using blogs as a medium in writing classes (Sanjaya, Apriani, & Edy, 2020).</p> <p>Blogs give students access to a real audience outside the classroom, encouraging them to produce writing that is meaningful and of high quality.</p>
Poll Everywhere/ Mentimeter	<p>García (2022) examined the use of Mentimeter to improve writing skills by incorporating a variety of tasks.</p> <p>Incorporating real-time polls allows teachers to promptly assess students' prior knowledge, misconceptions, and interests, facilitating more targeted instruction and personalized learning experiences.</p>
Mind Maps	<p>In Wahyu (2019) study “it can be concluded that the use of mind mapping technique in learning writing is effective to increase students’ engagement and interest” (p.247).</p> <p>Mind maps assist students in visually organizing their ideas, which can foster creativity, leading to more dynamic and well-organized writing.</p>
Slido	<p>The interactive features of Slido, including quizzes, polls, and surveys, facilitate instant feedback and boost student engagement.</p> <p>In Ningsih (2023) study Slido was utilized to create engaging learning environments that enhanced participation, motivation, and overall outcomes. By actively engaging in Slido activities, students were able to develop practical language skills relevant to real-world situations.</p>
QR Codes	<p>It was found out that QR codes could facilitate both independent and collaborative learning as well as it increases students’ motivation and engagement (Rikala& Kankaanranta, 2012).</p> <p>Teachers can use QR codes to make the writing process more interactive. For example, they can plan stages such as brainstorming, feedback, and revision.</p>

Table 1. List of digital tools used in writing classes

Methodology and Methods

Goal of Research and Research Paradigm

This study employed a quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, in order to examine the students' perceptions regarding the use of interactive writing tools. The quantitative component involved the collection of numerical data through a Google form. Surveys allow the efficient collection of data from a large number of respondents, providing a broad perspective on the research topic. It is also time-efficient method for gathering a large amount of data (Dawadi et al., 2021). An online survey consisting of 8 questions, a mixture of multiple choice, Likert-style, and open-ended questions. Average time spent on completing was 6 minutes. Two questions were aimed at collecting background information about the participants. Other questions focused on addressing the research objectives. Upon

participants' consent and assured anonymity and confidentiality. For ethical reasons, the research is described as carried out at 'X' private university.

This study explores the effect of incorporating digital tools on students' engagement and motivation. Additionally, it evaluates how different digital tools (such as Google Docs, Padlet, Slido, Polleverywhere, Mentimeter, Blogs and Canva) affect the development of students' writing skills, and examines students' perceptions of using these tools in writing classes.

Participants and Research Context

The participants for this study were chosen from 'X' private university, majoring in English Philology and Business Administration. This selection aligns with the research objective of exploring the effectiveness of using interactive digital tools in writing classes among students in Higher Education Institutions. The sample size of 60 participants was randomly chosen using an online survey. The participants of this study were students from the School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences; School of Business. The study was carried out among Bachelor's degree students, who had covered academic writing, General English, essay writing, or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Thus, the respondents have experienced working on improving writing skills in different courses.

Limitations of the Research

The research had several limitations. Firstly, the number of participants was limited. Therefore, future studies should include a larger group of students to obtain more generalizable results. Secondly, the study was conducted at one university, so it is advisable to include more universities in future research. More digital tools could be implemented in different study courses, in order to measure the effectiveness of interactive tools on students' motivation and engagement.

Findings

Research sample	N	%
First cycle	41	68.3
Second cycle	13	21.7
Third cycle	2	3.3
Fourth cycle	4	6.7
School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences	55	91.7
School of Business	5	8.4

Table 2. Structure of research sample

This research sample was chosen randomly from a larger population for the purpose of conducting a study. The sample allows to draw conclusions that can be generalized to the larger group. Majority of participants are from School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, as they have more courses related to improving English language skills. So, compared to students from the school of Business, they are expected to write more, and create academic paper.

Question: How skilled do you perceive yourself in writing competencies? Please tick as appropriate

Statements	4 Highly skilled	3 Skilled	2 low skilled	1 not skilled
Use of correct grammar	18.3 %	76.6%	5%	-
Use of specified vocabulary	16.6%	76.6%	6.6%	-
Use of imaginary	38.3%	56.6%	3.3%	1.6%
Use of figurative language	11.6%	71.6%	16.6%	-
Use of critical thinking for writing	40%	55%	5%	-
Managing the writing process (Brainstorming, Planning, revising, Drafting)	35%	53.3%	11.6%	-
Organizing ideas	41.6%	51.6%	5%	1.6%
Collaborative writing	33.3%	51.6%	10%	5%
Sentence construction	31.6%	65%	3.3%	-
Researching information	43.3%	53.3%	3.3%	-

Table 3. Students' perceptions regarding their writing skills

According to the given table, it could be clearly seen that the majority of participants (76.6%) are skilled in using correct grammar, with a significant number (18.3%) being highly skilled. Only a small percentage (5%) are low skilled, indicating that grammar is generally a strong area for most participants. Similar to grammar, most participants (76.6%) are skilled in using specified vocabulary, with a smaller number (16.6%) being highly skilled. A few participants (6.6%) struggle in this area. Other competencies as given in this table are considered to be an important part of writing skills. Since writing is not only about the language competency, but it is also about using other skills that help to compose a written work. In light of this, the students expressed their self-perceived level of other writing skills. For instance, a considerable amount of respondents (38.3%) are highly skilled in using imagery, with the majority (56.6%) being skilled. A minimal percentage (4.9%) find it challenging, indicating overall strong competency in this area. In case of using figurative language, only 11.6% are highly skilled, suggesting a potential area for improvement. Moreover, most students (40%) are highly skilled in critical thinking, which definitely helps to express their ideas better in a written form. The results show that students are skilled enough in managing the writing process (53.3%) and organizing ideas (51.6%), which are considered to be essential skills while brainstorming and making an outline for writing. Based on these findings, the majority of participants are skilled in most areas, particularly in using grammar, vocabulary, critical thinking, and researching information. On the other hand, certain areas such as the use of figurative language and managing the writing process show a need for improvement. More focus needs to be given on weaker areas like figurative language and collaborative writing, in order to enhance overall writing proficiency.

Question: If you have experienced using digital tools in writing classes, please tick as appropriate

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Use of digital tools help me generate a lot of ideas for writing assignments.	53.3%	30%	13.3%	3.3%	-
Use of Canva/Padlet/Blogs/Google docs give me interesting experience in writing English. I feel motivated.	56.6%	26.6%	11.6%	5%	-
While using Padlet or Canva - I do not feel under the pressure to create the perfect first draft.	48.3%	28.3%	16.6%	3.3%	3.3%
While using Canva/Padlet/Blogs - I do not feel stressed when receiving feedback from my peers and teacher.	46.6%	30%	18.3%	5%	-
Use of Canva/Padlet/Blogs/Google docs help me track my writing progress.	50%	33.3%	13.3%	3.3%	-
Use of PollEverywhere/Mentimeter/Slido make the writing process more interesting and interactive	41.6%	31.6%	23.3%	-	3.3%
Use of Canva/Padlet/Blogs/Google docs make me more responsible for my own writing.	48.3%	38.3%	11.6%	1.6%	-
I find QR codes easy to use in the class to make writing process more interesting.	55%	30%	13.3%	1.6%	-
While using all these digital tools- I feel confident with the writing assessment.	53.3%	35%	10%	1.6%	-
Use of these digital tools help me cooperate with other students	56.6%	35%	6.6%	-	1.6%
Use of Polleverywhere/Mentimeter/Slido in writing class could increase my confidence, consequently I can create an interesting content which is appropriate with the topic and well-organised	41.6%	28.3%	26.6%	-	3.3%
I feel using digital tools in writing class could enhance my writing skills, consequently I can create better content rather than write conventionally on paper	63.3%	25%	11.6%	-	-

Table 4. Students' opinions regarding using digital tools in writing classes

The data indicates that most students perceive digital tools positively, particularly in enhancing creativity, motivation, and responsibility in writing tasks. Students generally feel more confident and cooperative when using digital tools, which can be crucial for collaborative and peer-reviewed writing projects. It is noteworthy to mention that some

students remain neutral about the effectiveness of tools like PollEverywhere/Mentimeter/Slido in creating organized content, suggesting a need for further exploration or more targeted use of these tools in writing classes. For instance, most students (83.2%) feel that Canva/Padlet/Blogs/Google Docs tools offer a motivating and engaging experience in writing, indicating their effectiveness in enhancing student interest. Furthermore, the majority (76.6%) experience reduced stress when receiving feedback through these platforms, which could foster a more positive learning environment. What is more, 88.3% believe that using digital tools enhances their writing skills and results in better content compared to traditional paper-based writing. Hence, considering students' opinions regarding the use of interactive tools, it could be concluded that they have a positive attitude towards it. Their writing skills have significantly increased as well as their interest in writing more.

Other questions were aimed at investigating the opportunities provided to use digital tools in writing classes. According to the gained data, the students are more familiar with using Google docs, Canva and Qr codes compared to Blogs, Mentimeter, Polleverywhere. Besides, the participants (41.7%) point out that full opportunities are provided to experience various interactive digital tools in their writing classes. The results gained indicate that the instruction process is planned in a way to meet modern teaching standards, which focuses on incorporating technology in teaching and learning process.

Moreover, the survey contained an open-ended question to explore students' writing experiences and challenges related to it. One of the participants responded that:

“Developing writing skills involves generating and organizing ideas, mastering grammar and syntax, choosing the right vocabulary and style, thinking critically, effectively editing and revising, staying motivated and disciplined, understanding and engaging the audience, and using technical tools and proper formatting. Overcoming these challenges requires practice, feedback, and continuous learning.”

Some common challenges as mentioned in this open-ended question, include *Structuring the writing*, the respondents experience difficulty in organizing and structuring a piece of writing correctly; *Applying grammar rules*, students struggle with applying known grammatical rules in practice; *Limited vocabulary*, challenges related to having a poor vocabulary; *Organizing thoughts*, difficulty in organizing thoughts and ideas coherently; *Lack of feedback*, the participants think that they get insufficient feedback from lecturers, which affects writing improvement.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight several key insights into the use of interactive digital tools in writing classes and the challenges students face in developing writing skills. The data reveals correlation between students' perceptions, the effectiveness of digital tools, and the ongoing difficulties in mastering writing. The survey results demonstrate that digital tools, such as Canva, Padlet, Google Docs, and others, which have a significant positive impact on student engagement and motivation in writing classes. The findings revealed that these tools help them generate ideas, track their writing progress, and feel more confident in their writing assessments. This suggests that the integration of digital tools into writing instruction can enhance the overall learning experience by making it more interactive, personalized, and engaging. Furthermore, the use of tools like PollEverywhere, Mentimeter, and Slido was

found to make the writing process more interesting and interactive, although there were some mixed perceptions regarding their ability to help students create well-organized content. This indicates that while these tools are effective in fostering engagement, there may be a need for more targeted instruction on how to structure writing effectively.

These results of the research are in line with study, conducted by Yundayani, Susilawati and Chairunnisa (2019), which indicated that students in the experimental group made significantly fewer writing errors than those in the control group, demonstrating the positive impact of Canva on enhancing students' writing skills. It is evident that students value the use of Canva and recognize its significant benefits in enhancing their writing performance. Similar research focused on implementing Blogs in writing classes. This research showed that students responded positively to the use of blogs as a medium in writing classes. Additionally, students expressed a preference for completing assignments on a blog rather than writing traditionally on paper (Sanjaya, Apriani & Edy, 2020). The study on exploring the impact of digital tools also confirmed that digital technologies foster student creativity and personal expression. It also promotes greater collaboration among students (Purcell, Buchanan & Friedrich, 2013).

In addition, a similar study on incorporating digital tools in writing classes identified that it creates a better learning environment in terms of giving and receiving continuous feedback (Law,2019). This systematic review, which analyzed 16 Malaysian studies including primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels, found that digital tools enhanced students' writing skills and expanded their language knowledge, particularly in areas such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation (Ramamuthie& Aziz, 2022).

Overall, the study indicates that interactive digital tools have the potential to significantly enhance student engagement and writing skill development. By addressing the specific challenges students face, such as structuring writing, applying vocabulary, expressing ideas, teachers can create a more effective and supportive learning environment that fosters both academic and personal growth in writing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The goal of the study was to evaluate the impact of integrating digital tools on students' engagement and motivation in writing classes, assess how various digital tools influence the development of writing skills, and understand students' perceptions of these tools in the writing process. Digital tools are generally effective in boosting engagement, their use should be carefully integrated with traditional writing instruction. Teachers should continue to emphasize key aspects of writing, including structure, organization, and grammar, while using digital tools to support these areas. This could involve combining digital platforms with exercises focused on these skills. The findings of this study demonstrated a significant positive impact on students' writing abilities and overall engagement. These tools not only enhance students' skills in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation but also foster creativity, collaboration, and personal expression.

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