DIGITAL COLLABORATIVE WRITING TECHNIQUE USING PADLET IN ESSAY WRITING CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This research explores the utilization of Padlet as a collaborative writing platform in enhancing students' argumentative essay writing skills. Employing a case study by means of observation, document analysis, and interviews, the study examines how Padlet is employed on collaborative essay writing classroom and how it facilitates students' writing skills in argumentative essay writing process. The research findings reveal that while Padlet effectively fosters collaborative interactions among students, enabling them to engage in constructive feedback provision and substantive discussions, its underutilization remains noticeable. The platform's inability to facilitate targeted feedback due to the absence of specific text highlighting and commenting features emerged as a critical limitation hindering comprehensive feedback provision. In spite of these limitations, Padlet significantly improved various dimensions of students' writing skills. The collaborative environment nurtured by Padlet enabled peer feedback exchange, leading to enhancements in grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and overall essay quality. However, students' restricted exploration of Padlet's features underscores the gap between its potential and actual utilization within the classroom. To advance this research, future studies should focus on addressing Padlet's functional limitations by advocating for feature enhancements facilitating targeted feedback.

Keywords: *Digital collaborative writing, Padlet, blended-learning, essay writing*

INTRODUCTION

Writing skills play a crucial role in foreign language learning (Husin, Abdullah, Ismail, & Yoke, 2015; Nasser, 2016), especially in higher education contexts (David, Thang & Azman, 2015). Academically, written work serves as a basis for assessing students' intellectual levels (Tan, 2011) and determining their academic success (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007). Writing skills are among the most crucial abilities that university students must master as they are obligated to produce final assignments or theses at the end of their studies. Therefore, teaching writing courses should continuously encourage students to develop their writing skills.

However, learning writing skills is not as straightforward as acquiring other language skills (Alwasilah, 2001). Writing involves multiple language components such as grammar, organization, and understanding the purpose of writing (Graham, Harris, & McKeown, 2013; Widosari, Suwandi, Slamet, & Winarni, 2017). In the context of this research, writing in English may be perceived as

more complex by students due to differences in grammar rules, vocabulary, and text structures compared to their first language. Hence, students need assistance in overcoming difficulties in writing in English and should be provided space for corrections to improve their writing. Therefore, a technique that can facilitate collaborative writing among students is essential. Collaborating with peers holds potential to assist and support them in the writing process and improve the quality of their writing (Ardiasih, Emzir, & Rasyid, 2020).

Collaborative writing is regarded as an effective teaching method due to numerous benefits. Some of these benefits include enhancing students' understanding of their writing strengths and weaknesses (Challob, Bakar & Latif, 2016), providing opportunities for error correction based on peer feedback (Ferguson, 2011), reducing writing anxiety, and boosting students' confidence (Yan, 2019). Additionally, implementing collaborative writing techniques in the current online learning scenario presents a new challenge, requiring instructors to find digital platforms easy for both students and educators to collaborate on in writing. Padlet emerges as a commonly used alternative tool for collaborative writing instruction.

While various empirical studies highlight the advantages of digital-based collaborative writing techniques using Padlet such as Defilippi, Miller, Avila (2020), Fisher (2017), Rashid, Yunus, & Wahi (2019), and Saepuloh & Salsabila (2020), none have specifically delved into its application in argumentative essay writing. Therefore, this research aims to bridge this gap by identifying how this technique is implemented using Padlet and how Padlet's usage in collaborative writing instruction facilitates students in developing their skills in argumentative essay writing.

Collaborative Writing Technique

Collaboration can be defined as reciprocal interaction among members of a group working together in an organized manner to solve problems collectively (Storch, 2005). Specifically, collaborative writing refers to a group of students working together to produce a shared written product (Inglehart, Narko & Zimmerman, 2003; Storch, 2019). According to Lowry, Curtis & Lowry (2004), collaborative writing is seen as a social process where group members focus on shared goals, negotiate, collaborate, and discuss in creating text. Through collaborative writing activities, students learn from each other, leading to the production of better-written work (Dobao & Blum, 2013; Kim, 2008; Jafari and Ansari, 2012; Watanabe & Swain, 2007).

Collaborative writing is considered an effective teaching method in writing classes by numerous researchers (Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2011). It aids in improving students' understanding of their writing strengths and weaknesses (Challob, Bakar, and Latif, 2016), fostering knowledge, understanding, and student participation as a result of their social interactions (Ansarimoghaddam & Bee, 2013; Wang & Chen, 2013). Furthermore, collaborative learning helps reduce writing apprehension and enhances students' confidence (Yan, 2019).

Collaborative learning is extensively used in university-level education as it is considered a student-centered approach, offering numerous benefits to learners (Bremner, 2010), particularly language learners. The social interaction among peers and their learning environment significantly influences foreign language learning. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that language acquisition is a social process and development that is termed as Zone of Proximal Development

(ZPD). Therefore, Foley and Thompson (2003) affirm that collaborative activities are crucial in language classes to aid students in developing their language skills. Especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writing contexts, students often struggle due to insufficient understanding of English text structures (Kemala, Sastromiharjo & Mulyati, 2020). Hence, collaboration and peer feedback can be advantageous for students to improve their understanding and writing quality Harmer, 2007; Hyland, 2003; Pham, 2019; Pham et al., 2020; Pham & Nguyen, 2020).

Moreover, in collaborative writing, students receive feedback from their group members. By reviewing each other's writing, group members can offer diverse perspectives (Wiggins, 2012) and constructive suggestions for each other's writing improvement. The role of peer feedback is crucial in fostering students' development as independent learners (Ferguson, 2011), especially in the current online learning context.

Furthermore, feedback from peers hones students' critical thinking skills as they learn to explore information, evaluate (Guasch and Espasa, 2015), and articulate their thoughts during interactions (Liu & Hansen, 2002) while commenting on each other's draft writing. Implementing collaborative writing techniques through digital media in current online learning can make collaborative learning in writing more accessible, productive, and engaging (Yu and Lee, 2016). Platforms like blogs, Facebook, Wikis, and Padlet are commonly used due to their ability to create new learning opportunities (Bishop & Elen, 2014).

Usage of Padlet in Instruction

Contemporary teaching processes have been enhanced with the use of digital tools that help develop students' ideas, skills, and motivation for learning

(Demirkan, 2019). Displaying students' thoughts and ideas through various technological modes aids students in internalizing new knowledge, facilitating better learning (Dewitt, Alias & Siraj, 2015). Padlet is among the widely used digital tools for learning purposes.

Padlet is a free web-based application providing a virtual wall where users can post text, images, links, videos, comment on them, and make them viewable to anyone with the specific link or address to that wall (Lai and Hwang, 2016). Consequently, Padlet offers a platform for both individual and collaborative learning in multiple physical locations (Tomlinson, 2013).

In the learning process, Padlet serves various functions, such as acting as a virtual whiteboard, providing space to record notes, ask questions, and give feedback. It can be used for review, summarizing material, assigning out-of-class tasks due to limited in-class time (Fisher, 2017), reflection, online discussions, and collaboration (Algraini, 2014; Delacruz, Brock, Fuglestad, Ferrell, Huffer & Melvin, 2014). Especially in language learning, many researchers have demonstrated how collaborative practices with web-based applications have positively affected students' language learning (Omar, Embi, & Yunus, 2012). In the implementation of collaborative writing activities, both teachers and students can use Padlet to collaborate, request advice, and receive constructive corrections (Zhi & Su, 2015). Comments and corrections from teachers and classmates help students reflect and correct errors.

Moreover, apart from its contribution to improving students' learning outcomes, research on Padlet highlights its ability to enhance teacher-student relationships, increase motivation and self-esteem, and provide an alternative

means for teachers to communicate with students outside the classroom (Putman, 2014). This encourages active student participation and could serve as an assessment basis for the entire class in real-time (Fuchs, 2014).

Based on these aforementioned benefits, Padlet was chosen for use in implementing collaborative writing techniques in this research to aid students in overcoming writing challenges they face and subsequently enhance the quality of their written work.

METHOD

The objective of this research is to understand how the collaborative writing technique is implemented using Padlet and how Padlet's usage in collaborative writing instruction facilitates students in developing their skills in argumentative essay writing. This study is a qualitative program evaluation research, where the researcher designs and conducts the instructional activities (Nunan, 1992). Additionally, this research can also be categorized as a case study examining a specific educational phenomenon (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Nunan, 1992) in a natural context (Creswell, 2009).

The study was conducted within an essay writing class situated in the English Literature program, involving a cohort of 25 students enrolled in the course. To ensure robustness and reliability of the data, multiple research instruments were employed, including observation, analysis of student documents, and interviews, aligning with the principles of data validity explained by Yin (2003). Observation served as a pivotal means to comprehensively capture the implementation of the collaborative writing technique utilizing Padlet within the classroom activities. The pedagogical approach adopted in this study involved a blended-learning model, primarily

emphasizing asynchronous online sessions. During these sessions, students were tasked with reviewing their peers' written work and providing constructive feedback. Subsequently, students were required to revise their writing based on the feedback received, both from their peers and the instructor. Notably, these revisions were mandated to occur at least twice, with the intent to assess and observe enhancements in the students' proficiency in crafting argumentative texts. A digital space was provided via a 'wall' on Padlet to facilitate the uploading of their revised work. Furthermore, an analysis of the students' writing was conducted to determine how their English writing skills were influenced and enhanced through the integration of Padlet in collaborative writing activities. Concurrently, interviews were employed as a means to validate and deepen the understanding of the perceived advantages and challenges associated with the collaborative writing technique employing Padlet, as perceived by the students themselves. The triangulation of these research instruments mitigates the risk of limited data and increase the validity of the research findings (Alwasilah, 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The gathered data from each instrument were analyzed, categorized, and interpreted based on relevant theories to answer the research questions. The observational data covered detailed notes and recordings of the implementation of collaborative writing techniques using Padlet during classroom activities. The analysis of the observational data was to identify recurring patterns, key behaviors, and nuances in how students engaged with the collaborative writing process. Furthermore, the documents collected comprised the students' written work. This involved a comparative analysis between initial drafts, subsequent revisions, and final submissions to discern the qualitative changes and improvements in their written

work. Subsequently, recordings of interviews conducted with students were thoroughly examined by identifying perspectives expressed by the participants regarding the collaborative writing technique utilizing Padlet.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As discussed above, the main objectives of this research are to identify how the collaborative writing technique is implemented using Padlet and how Padlet's usage in collaborative writing instruction facilitates students in developing their skills in argumentative essay writing. The results of the analysis from observation, document analysis and interview are presented below.

Utilization of Padlet Features in Collaborative Writing

The research study incorporated the use of Padlet during the assessment stage within an essay writing course. The essay writing lesson involved several steps to evaluate the students' understanding and application of argumentative essay structures. This usage of Padlet is relevant with some researchers (Algraini, 2014; Delacruz, Brock, Fuglestad, Ferrell, Huffer & Melvin, 2014; Fisher, 2017) who affirmed that Padlet could be utilized for assessment, reflection, online discussions, and collaboration. In the context of this study, the session commenced with a detailed presentation by the lecturer explaining the fundamental framework of an argumentative essay. This comprehensive overview highlighted the essential components and organization required for constructing a compelling argument.

Following this introduction, the class proceeded to explore practical learning by examining examples of argumentative essays. Through this analysis, students gained insight into different approaches to organizing

arguments effectively within an essay format. In addition, attention was given to comparing these examples to identify the structures that distinguished a well-organized argumentative essay from a poorly structured one. This comparative analysis provided a clear demonstration of the critical elements necessary for crafting a coherent and persuasive essay. Subsequently, students were asked to apply their acquired knowledge by independently creating their argumentative essays on a predetermined topic. A Padlet link was provided by the lecturer for students to upload their initial drafts. Moreover, to ensure the collaborative writing is conducted, the lecturer provided explicit guidelines on offering constructive feedback to their peers' submissions. These instructions aimed to enable students to provide insightful comments and suggestions to enhance the quality of each other's essays.

The investigation into the application of Padlet within the classroom environment revealed a varied utilization of its features, prominently the wall and commenting system. Despite the platform's potential for integrating multimedia elements, this feature remained underutilized among the students. This underutilization seems to stem from a limited exploration of Padlet's functionalities by the students themselves.

The study highlighted a significant observation: the students predominantly focused on fulfilling the task of providing constructive feedback, per the explicit instructions given by the lecturer. This narrow interpretation led them to perceive their role solely as identifying and commenting on the errors present in their peers' writing. Notably, this perception was reinforced during interviews, where a majority of the students admitted their lack of awareness regarding the multimedia feature of Padlet. They expressed the belief that adhering strictly to the lecturer's

directive of delivering constructive feedback sufficed for their participation, without further exploration of additional functionalities.

Furthermore, it was evident that the students' engagement with Padlet was primarily directed towards evaluating the comments provided by their peers. This outlook towards peer assessment resulted in a lack of exploration or investigation with other Padlet features beyond the commenting system. The students' concern with evaluating their peers' feedback seemed to limit their curiosity and exploration of Padlet's broader capabilities.

Fundamentally, the findings highlighted a significant difference in the students' perception and utilization of Padlet's functionalities. Despite the platform's potential for multimedia integration, the students' focus primarily centered around fulfilling the specific task of constructive feedback provision, thereby neglecting the broader range of features available. This pattern of behavior indicated a potential gap between the intended use of Padlet and the students' actual engagement, emphasizing the need for clearer guidance or training to encourage a more comprehensive exploration and utilization of Padlet's many-sided capabilities within educational settings.

Improved Collaborative Interaction and Writing Skills

In the observation, despite the noted underutilization of Padlet's features by students, an interesting finding emerged: a noticeable increase in engagement and active participation during collaborative writing sessions facilitated by Padlet. The platform served as a catalyst for fostering productive collaboration among students, enabling them to engage in meaningful, constructive feedback provision, and

substantive discussions focused on various sides of essay writing, including content, structure, and argumentative strategies.

One significant point was the expanded scope of feedback provided by students during these collaborative sessions. Beyond traditional considerations like grammar, vocabulary, and essay structure, students also offered feedback and commentary on the substantive content of their peers' essays. Moreover, students actively expressed appreciation and acknowledgment of the strengths within their peers' writing, fostering a supportive and encouraging atmosphere conducive to collaborative learning.

Supporting the observational findings, interviews conducted with participants validated this positive impact on collaborative interaction. A majority of the respondents expressed a heightened sense of satisfaction regarding the quality of their collaborative engagement facilitated by Padlet. They attributed this enhancement to the valuable feedback received from both their peers and the lecturer, which they believed helpful in refining and revising their argumentative essays to a better essay.

The conclusion of these findings implies that despite the underutilization of Padlet's functionalities, its role in facilitating collaborative writing activities significantly improved the quality of interaction among students. The platform's ability to promote inclusive and varied feedback led to a more enriching collaborative environment, empowering students to revise and enhance their argumentative essays based on constructive criticism and peer support, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement and learning within the classroom setting. This result is in line with Zainuddin et al. (2021) who revealed that Padlet had a significant effect on improving students' engagement in

classroom activities. Etfita and Wahyuni (2021) confirmed that Padlet is effective for facilitating collaborative activities outside of the classroom and for enhancing the teaching and learning of essay writing in Mandarin language.

In addition to the improved collaborative interaction, this study also revealed the impact of collaborative writing using Padlet on students' writing skills, focusing on their perceived improvements in grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and overall essay quality that is stemmed from collaborative engagement and feedback.

Specifically, participants reported a heightened sense of improvement in their grasp of grammar usage. The collaborative environment fostered by Padlet enabled students to receive constructive feedback from peers regarding grammatical errors, leading to an increased awareness and refinement of their grammatical proficiency. Additionally, students expressed an expansion in their vocabulary repertoire. Furthermore, students noted improvements in coherence within their essays. The collaborative nature of Padlet encouraged discussions on essay structure and argumentative flow, enabling students to refine their coherence by incorporating feedback from peers. This process of iterative refinement contributed significantly to the overall quality of their essays.

The overall perceived improvement in essay quality was a consistent sentiment among the participants. The collaborative writing activities facilitated by Padlet provided students with a platform for constructive criticism, insightful discussions, and the opportunity to refine their work based on peer feedback. As a result, students reported a qualitative enhancement in the overall composition and presentation of their argumentative essays.

Moreover, the qualitative data from interviews supported these findings, with students expressing a sense of accomplishment and progress in their writing skills. Many students acknowledged the value of collaborative engagement facilitated by Padlet, attributing their perceived improvements directly to the constructive feedback received from peers and the subsequent revisions made to their essays. This supports the previous research result from Ahmad, Rubayyi, and Etfita (2022).

The document analysis of the argumentative essay drafts that the students created through the implementation of collaborative writing sessions revealed enhancements across various dimensions of writing skills. Specifically, the analysis of pre- and post-collaborative writing activity essays showed substantial improvements in argumentative coherence. Essays produced after engaging in collaborative writing sessions through Padlet displayed a more coherent structure, demonstrating a clearer and more logical progression of arguments.

Additionally, the analysis highlighted improvements in the structural organization of essays. Essays created after collaborative writing activities exhibited a more refined and organized structure, indicating a better presentation of ideas and arguments. Furthermore, the analysis revealed enhanced grammatical accuracy in essays produced after collaborative writing activities. Students displayed greater proficiency in grammar, with a reduction in grammatical errors compared to their earlier essays. This echoes the research of Ahmad, Rubayyi, and Etfita (2022), which emphasized the impact of collaborative writing platforms on enhancing the overall quality of student essays.

In conclusion, the research findings suggest a positive correlation between collaborative writing using Padlet and the enhancement of students' writing skills. The collaborative environment fostered by Padlet promoted peer interaction, constructive feedback exchange, and iterative revisions, leading to noticeable improvements in grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and overall essay quality. This underscores the potential of collaborative writing platforms like Padlet as effective tools for cultivating and refining students' writing abilities within educational settings.

Limitation in providing targeted feedback

The observation and interview result revealed the limitations faced by students in providing targeted feedback on their peers' essays using Padlet, particularly concerning the inability to highlight specific parts of the text for commentary. This limitation hindered students' ability to provide comprehensive feedback, as they were restricted to offering comments on the entire text rather than focusing on specific sections. The findings revealed that students expressed a preference for a more nuanced approach in their feedback process, desiring the capability to highlight and comment on specific sections or sentences within the essay. However, Padlet's interface did not facilitate this feature, resulting in a constraint where students were compelled to provide feedback on the entire piece rather than focusing on particular segments, inhibiting their ability to offer detailed and targeted comments.

As a consequence of this limitation, students faced a challenge in conveying multiple feedback points effectively. Despite their intention to provide comprehensive feedback, they were constrained to only addressing certain critical aspects due to the platform's limitations. This limitation led to students prioritizing certain crucial points for commentary, thus limiting the breadth and depth of feedback they could offer.

Furthermore, the study uncovered that the students encountered difficulties in expressing numerous feedback points, which they might have wanted to convey. Padlet's restriction on specific highlighting and commenting features led students to prioritize only essential feedback points, limiting the extent of their comments to those they deemed most crucial within the overall text.

Essentially, the research findings highlighted the obstacle posed by Padlet's lack of functionality in allowing students to highlight and comment on specific parts of an essay. This constraint limited the students' ability to provide detailed, comprehensive feedback, forcing them to focus only on critical points, thereby restricting the richness and depth of their feedback Teng, Lim, & Tan (2020).

CONCLUSION

The study on Padlet's implementation for collaborative writing in argumentative essay development illuminated both its potentials and limitations within educational settings. While acknowledging Padlet's capacity to foster collaboration and enhance certain writing skills, the research revealed substantial underutilization of its features, particularly the platform's limitation in enabling targeted feedback.

The study highlighted the positive impact of Padlet in enriching collaborative interaction among students, improving grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and overall essay quality. It showed how the platform facilitated meaningful peer engagement, enabling constructive criticism and iterative revisions that

significantly enhanced the students' writing proficiency.

However, a critical limitation surfaced concerning Padlet's incapability to enable students to highlight specific parts of the text for commentary. This constraint hindered the provision of comprehensive feedback, limiting students to focus on broader aspects rather than pinpointing specific sections for improvement.

To further this research, future research should focus on addressing Padlet's functional limitations by advocating for or developing features that allow targeted feedback provision. Moreover, investigating diverse instructional strategies to encourage students to explore Padlet's comprehensive functionalities would bridge the gap between its potential and actual utilization.

In conclusion, while Padlet demonstrates promise as a collaborative writing platform, understanding and addressing its limitations are crucial for maximizing its effectiveness in nurturing students' writing skills within educational environments. Future research should aim to optimize its functionality and explore innovative pedagogical approaches to unlock Padlet's full potential for fostering collaborative writing and enhancing students' overall learning experiences.

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