PADDLE YOUR WAY INTO WRITING: INTEGRATING PADLET FOR ESL LEARNERS

Fatin Kamilia Mohd Arif, Joanna Bunga Noah, Faiza Rostam Affendi, Melor Md Yunus

Abstract—This paper aims to investigate the students’ perception, advantages and challenges on using Padlet as a writing strategy. This study applied a quantitative research method to investigate students’ perception on the integration of Padlet as a writing strategy. The findings indicate that the majority of the students agreed that the usage of Padlet aided their writing process. However, the respondents find that the limited access to devices and internet connection can prove to be a challenge in implementing this integration. This research can be used for teachers teaching writing. In this research, the innovation of Padlet was integrated into classrooms, making learning more effective and accessible to all in line with 21st Century Teaching and Learning.

Index Terms—ESL writing, Learning innovation, Padlet, Technology, Writing strategy.

1 INTRODUCTION

GLOBALLY, rapid development of technology has brought about several new methods of teaching and learning. In this 4IR era, the integration of technology in the classroom is no longer foreign to educators and learners. Thus, it is a necessity for both educators and learners to update themselves with the knowledge on current technology for constructive learning to take place. Regardless of all these advancement, ESL learners in Malaysia are still having a hard time in mastering English language skills and it is very worrying considering that they have been learning the language since their first year of primary school. Out of the four language skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading), writing is considered the most challenging skill to master [1], [2], [3], [4]. According to these experts, the reason why writing is the most difficult skill to acquire is because of its complex components that include organisation, content and the development of ideas. Besides that, the lack of exposure towards various pre-writing strategies is one of the factors that leads to the decline in good writing among students. Schools only provide strategies that are common and are not fit to cater 21st century audience as the students are deprived from what they are familiar to. For example, visual maps are overly used for everything but the students fail to see the connection from one visual to another as they do not have interest nor motivation in them. Therefore, educators need to opt to teaching approaches that are able to capture the students’ interest in writing which include the usage of web 2.0 rather than sticking to conventional teaching methods as students are now more inclined to use mobile devices and its related contents as according to Tölstoukhova et al. [5], students in today’s generation work best with technologies. Besides, students become more motivated to learn if technologies are used in the classroom and at the same time, it promotes autonomous learning as they are able to organise their work according to their preferences [5], [6], [7]. Several researchers have proved that the new approaches of teaching and learning such as mobile learning [8] and gamification [9]-[10] can be used to enhance language learning, including writing skill.

Padlet, an application that creates an online bulletin board that allows its users to display all types of information on any topic. Padlet, an application that creates an online bulletin board that allows its users to display all types of information on any topic. The integration of technology in an ESL classroom has become a must in order to keep up with the current trends in education. According to Taranto et al. [13] and Mohd Arif et al. [10], classroom experience should advance along with the world which is advancing and moving towards being strongly connected to information and communication technologies (ICT). Though gadgets such as tablets and smartphones will not be able to substitute role of teachers entirely, Mohamad et al. [14] believed that the growing significance of technology among ESL learners creates opportunities to provide extra English language practice; which is much needed by students, anytime, anywhere. A similar study is conducted by Mohd Arif et al. [15] using Kahoot in providing flexibility for students’ better English learning experience. The most important thing to be considered in implementing this learning tool in an ESL classroom is the application itself; whether it is effective or not. Mohd Arif et al. [10] suggested that the best apps to be used in an ESL classroom should be a tool that requires the user to complete something in a short time while teachers should be able to link that activity to a longer activity which encourages repeated use and progress. Padlet is a free web based

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application that provides a “wall” that allows the user to post words, pictures and videos, which could be viewed by anyone with the link or address to the specific wall. Many researchers have shown how collaborative practices are encouraged exponentially with the advent of Web 2.0 [16]. Webtools such as Facebook and blogs have shown to have positive effect on students' language learning [17]. Beitz [18] stated that the use of Padlet in classroom activities proved to be beneficial for both teachers and students as it contributes in building positive communities and the fluidity of the learning environment that incorporates modern technology in an ESL context. Based on a study conducted by Yunus et al. [19], such learning tool in an ESL classroom enables students to interact with one another in a less stressful manner other than its ability to trigger students' creative thinking skills. The most neglected stage is the pre-writing stage and by providing an array of pre-writing experiences, greater writing achievement can be achieved than those enjoined to get to work on their writing without this kind of preparation [20]. In the same line of reasoning, it enables student-centered environment to be applied. Henceforth, producing active and collaborative students [21], [22]. Despite the advantages, some researches also revealed the weakness of its implementation. As stated by Mohd Arif et al. [10] and Halim & Hashim [23], as students are used to using tablets and smartphones for entertainment and leisure, they are quite held back when using technology as learning tools. Other than that, the strength of the internet connection may also affect the flow of the lessons when integrating technology [24].

3 METHODOLOGY

This study applied a quantitative research method to investigate students’ perception on the integration of Padlet as a writing strategy. This study was carried out in a secondary school in the state of Selangor and consists of 30 Form One students as the respondents. The activities were conducted in three sessions during English lessons in a span of three weeks. In all three sessions, Padlet was used to aid the students with their writing process. Data was collected using pre-test, post-test and a questionnaire was given to them after the last session was conducted. A 20-item questionnaire was developed to meet the objectives of the research. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A contained questions on the respondents’ demographic information. Section B consisted of questions on students’ perception on using Padlet as a writing strategy. Section C contained questions on advantages of using Padlet as a writing strategy while Section D focused on challenges in using Padlet as a pre-writing strategy. Since the respondents were Form One students, the responses were based on a three-point Likert scale (1 = “disagree”, 2 = “neutral”, 3 = “disagree”). The data was analyzed using descriptive analysis.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Students’ Perception on Using Padlet as a Pre-Writing Strategy

In general, the respondents’ feedbacks on using Padlet as a pre-writing strategy are mostly positive to all items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel comfortable while using Padlet as a strategy to learn writing.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel encouraged and motivated to learn writing while using Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I prefer visual mapping as a method to spark ideas instead of writing them down in sentences.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I find Padlet very interesting and very easy to use.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I will use Padlet for every chance of using a visual map from now on.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D-Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree

In order to investigate the students’ perception on using Padlet as a pre-writing strategy, the researchers identified the students’ responses in regard to their motivation and opinion on visual mapping. Based on table 1, item 2, 93.3% (n=28) of the students feel very encouraged and motivated to learn while writing via the implementation of Padlet. This is supported by Rashid et al. [25] and Suhaimi et al. [26] whereby usage of technology, Padlet, can increase students’ interest, motivation and enjoyment which is directly proportional to enhancement of their writing skills and participation in writing activities. 83.3% (n=25) of the students also prefer visual mapping as a method to spark ideas, which proves that learning writing can be enhanced via Padlet especially for visual learners. Students have a positive perception on Padlet, as 93.3% (n=28) and 96.7% (n=29) of the students find Padlet interesting and will attempt to use it from now on. Learning writing is heavily based on the formation of ideas and expansion of it, and by incorporating Padlet as a pre-writing tool, students are able to discover, expand and receive more and better ideas as opposed to writing without a visual aid [27], [28].

4.2 Advantages in Using Padlet as a Pre-Writing Strategy

Majority of the respondents agreed that using Padlet as a pre-writing strategy comes with great advantages.
Table 2
ADVENTAGES IN USING PADLET AS A PRE-WRITING STRATEGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can organize my thoughts better by adding visuals related images on Padlet before the actual writing.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I learn new vocabulary from browsing Padlet.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I discover new ideas related to the topic on Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I can expand my ideas for writing better while using Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I get more and better ideas for writing from materials posted by my peers on Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I find it easier to complete my essays after participating in Padlet activities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I remember the points to include in my essay better using Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I can obtain a lot of useful information and knowledge while browsing through Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I can stay focused longer while using Padlet as compared to normal lessons on writing.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I know how to improve on my writing skills with help from Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D-Disagree  N-Neutral  A-Agree

Based on Table 2, it shows that majority of the students agree that using Padlet in their writing lessons is an advantage for them. Not only do they learn how to organise ideas and write better, but they are also gaining other skills along with it. This is also supported from a previous study conducted by Mahmud [29] whereby his respondents also believed that Padlet helped them sharpen their writing skills while gaining new knowledge and collaborating with friends. According to Mafton & Seyyedrezaei [30], the purpose of writing is to communicate one’s ideas clearly and logically and that prior planning can help the students to write more clearly and effectively. This shows the advantage in using Padlet, for students to brainstorm and pre-plan their writing to be able to write better. Teachers need to incorporate innovative ways to support and improve the students’ writing skills that also extends to outside of the classroom [26]. This further supports Padlet as an advantageous tool for pre-writing. Other than Padlet being a tool for students to place their ideas, through the “web search” feature available, students can obtain more information and knowledge while completing their task at hand, which indirectly encourages learners’ independence and self-discovery skills [31]. According to item 7, 73.3% (n=22) found that Padlet helped them learn new vocabulary. This shows that Padlet can indirectly develop students holistically.

4.3 Challenges in Using Padlet as a Pre-Writing Strategy
Padlet as a pre-writing strategy also has its challenges, that can be overcome with certain measures.

Table 3
CHALLENGES IN USING PADLET AS A PRE-WRITING STRATEGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I find it difficult to find a secure Internet connection.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I tend to be distracted by other features of Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I can use Padlet very well.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I have smartphones/ tablets that can support Padlet and other mobile platforms to learn writing.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I can learn about writing better through visual mapping and Padlet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D-Disagree  N-Neutral  A-Agree

With the integration of technology in classrooms, there are bound to be a few challenges that could hinder the effectiveness of the lesson [24]. Based on the research, the two main challenges present were in regards to (i) finding a secure internet connection and (ii) having a device that can support Padlet or other mobile platforms to learn writing. 80% (n=24) of the students agreed that it is difficult to find a secure internet connection especially if the lessons are not held in the computer lab. Wifi might not be easily accessible in certain areas of the school. Padlet relies entirely on an internet connection, so not having a stable one would be a challenge. In this era of modern technology, devices like smartphones or tablets are ubiquitous and most students as young as 13 own their own personal devices. These devices usually support Padlet which means that students can not only use Padlet in a school setting, but also at home when they are doing their own writing homework. Technology today supports flexibility of learning beyond schools whereby students can learn anytime and anywhere especially when they own their own smart devices [5], [29]. This shows blended learning in line with 21st Century Teaching and Learning. For the 26.7% (n=8) that do not own their own devices, they could use either their parents’ devices or go to a cyber cafe nearby for educational purposes.

5 CONCLUSION
The findings clearly demonstrate that the usage of Padlet as a pre-writing strategy can greatly benefit ESL students’ writing skills. Not only is Padlet an advantage to the students’ writing tasks, but through Padlet, students gain a lot more, which includes learning new vocabularies and new knowledge. This is due to the advancement of technology that we should acknowledge in line with 21st Century Teaching and Learning. Nevertheless, challenges are bound to arise when it comes to integrating technology in the classroom, but it could be overcome by proper planning and having backup solutions. In conclusion, the use of Padlet to enable students to visually map their ideas prior to writing is a good pre-writing strategy. Teachers should consider integrating Padlet in their classrooms, as it has been proven beneficial for the students.
6 FUTURE SCOPE OF THE WORK
In the future studies, respondents of various backgrounds namely age, programmes, geographical location, and skills could be included, so that there is a more comprehensive pool of data that would further enhance the necessity of the research. Besides, other types of Web 2.0 tools such as Google Classroom, Coggle and others could also be implemented in language classrooms in order to study their perception, advantages as well as the challenges faced by students and teachers. In a few years later, Padlet might be outperformed by other web-based applications that are more inclusive and interactive to suit the needs of our students.

REFERENCES