

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF CANVA ON STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS

Audi Yundayani

English Education Study Program, STKIP Kusuma Negara, Indonesia
E-mail: audi_yundayani@stkipkusumanegara.ac.id

Susilawati

English Education Study Program, STKIP Kusuma Negara, Indonesia
E-mail: susilawatitoto@stkipkusumanegara.ac.id

Chairunnisa

English Education Study Program, STKIP Kusuma Negara, Indonesia
E-mail: chairunnisa.khis@stkipkusumanegara.ac.id

APA Citation: Yundayani, A., Susilawati, S., & Chairunnisa, C. (2019). Investigating the effect of Canva on students' writing skills. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 7(2), 169-176. doi: 10.25134/erjee.v7i2.1800.

Received: 28-01-2019

Accepted: 30-04-2019

Published: 01-06-2019

Abstract: A growing number of language teaching studies have started to consider the role of technology in teaching writing. Moreover, recent work in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class has highlighted the importance of introducing visual media in an effort to help students improve their writing skills. The present study aims at investigating the effect of Canva on students' writing skills. To this end, forty-four Indonesian EFL students were selected and assigned randomly to two writing classes, namely control and experimental groups. Before the treatment, both groups had a pre-test. During the sessions of instruction, both classes were taught by adopting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. However, in the experimental group, in order to help students to explore their writing ideas, they were asked to use Canva as media of writing. After the treatment, both groups had a post-test. Then, the number of writing errors made by students from both groups were compared using ANCOVA. The results showed that students in the experimental group had a significantly lower number of writing errors compared to the control group, which confirmed the positive effect of Canva in improving students' writing skills.

Keywords: *canva; communicative language teaching; visual media; writing skill.*

INTRODUCTION

The mastery of writing skill in English is a priority for many higher education students including in Indonesian context. Writing in English is considered to be a skill included in the core academic skills and the most complex skills to master compared to reading, listening and speaking (Makalela, 2004). Writing, a communicative skill, can be seen as a mechanism to experience students' knowledge by developing and presenting their ideas. In addition, Zamel (1982) viewed writing as a meaning-created process. It means that writing requires a recursive process for being able to deliver meaning.

Further, Hyland (2003) believes that writing instructions had a process model covering; 1) selection, 2) pre-writing, 3) composing, 4) replying to drafting, 5) editing and proofreading, 6) evaluation, 7) publishing, and 8) follow-up tasks. The process itself requires students to

discover and reformulate their thoughts as they try to approximate meaning. In order to support that condition, language teachers need to not only teach English, but also simplify the complex writing process for their students. Thus, to facilitate students' writing skill, proper learning media to writing should be introduced in EFL class.

Learning writing, however, is not an easy task for many EFL students who have insufficient vulnerability outside of class to the authentic language. Previous studies have indicated that such factors as lack of writing experience, language deficiency, and low motivation may cause EFL students face difficulties in writing (Ying, 2018; Yundayani, 2018; Zhang, 2018). Although almost all scholars in the field generally accept that writing difficulties are an integral part of the EFL learning process and that students should be supported in overcoming their difficulties, the

same consensus has not been shared on how to treat the difficulties of students.

In this current situation, college students prefer to participate in their activities using technology. Several researchers (Hernandez, 2017; Wiyaka, Mujiyanto, & Rukmini, 2018) point out that technology is an important language teaching tool in this sense since the use of technology can increase students' motivation. They are equipped with digital age literacy, inventive thinking, high-order thinking and sound reasoning, effective communication and high productivity (Tinio, 2002). Students need those to develop their language skills, including writing skills. One of the controversial issues in foreign language teaching was the level of technology use required in writing classes, including media formats.

Media formats, the physical forms in which content is incorporated and displayed, facilitate the learning process. Visual media is a type of media used for language learning. It can be diagrams on a computer screen, whiteboard drawings, photographs, book graphics, cartoons, etc. (Smaldino, Lowther, Mims, & Russell, 2015). This media provides a learning experience that is consistent with students' character as digital native. The visual media also supports the creation of EFL students, expressing themselves to communicate with others.

Canva, a graphic-design tool website, is a visual technology media with a drag-and-drop format and provides access to over a million photographs, graphics, and fonts. It has millions of images, photo filters, free icons and shapes, and hundreds of fonts (Canva, n.d.). Canva as a website is a source of visual media that can be used as a window into the wider world outside the language class and is, of course, a collection of authentic material that is easily accessible.

Canva can be integrated to promote learning. Smaldino *et al.*, (2015) stated that visuals in the classroom, including Canva, can serve multiple purposes, such as; 1) to make abstract ideas concrete; 2) to motivate students; 3) to give direct attention; 4) to repeat the information; 5) to recall previous knowledge; and 6) to reduce learning effort. Canva is believed to be a tool for moving in just a few clicks from an abstract idea to a concrete site map. In addition, it can create a positive learning environment through any provided facilities, thus affecting the concentration, memory and attitude of the students. If students feel positive about their

situation, they will also feel more positive about what they are doing and will be more willing to participate through direct attention in the learning process. The best way in learning is when the students get experience through the meaningful learning process and it becomes easier to recall. Canva provides moment experience for students to engage in creative process, so they can repeat the information through recalling their previous knowledge.

All in all, most research studies in technology media conducted in EFL classes rarely take the application of Canva specifically to the writing process into consideration. We can refer to Wahyuni and Thohiriyah (2018), who reviewed Canva as the infographic tool in presenting the teaching materials, among the existing research studies in this field. The study results showed that Canva offers different themes and professional layouts to create the compelling infographic for presenting the teaching materials. It is also a simple tool that is extremely user-friendly. It should be noted that their research only focused on infographics and they did not incorporate the use of Canva as a language learning media.

Therefore, this study intends to find out whether there were any statistically significant differences between the use of Canva and non-Canva on the students' writing performance. Besides, this study also tries to find out the students' voices towards the implementation of Canva in teaching writing.

METHOD

This study applied a mixed method design which is started by collecting the quantitative data. After analyzing the quantitative data, the qualitative data were then collected and analyzed. 44 mid-intermediate college students were randomly assigned to two intact groups, namely control and experimental group. Each group consists of 22 students.

The data collection procedure included pilot testing, homogenizing participants, administering writing test, conducting treatment, and conducting a semi-structured interview. Here, a writing pre-test was administered before the treatment in which the students were asked to write a paragraph of 200 words for about 30 minutes.

Following the pre-test, treatment was conducted to the experimental group. To achieve the study's goal, Canva has been provided to the students with orientation session and how it

helps them perform their writing activities. Then, during the term, the experimental group participants were asked to use Canva in writing process, including selecting the topic, composing, and publishing. On the other hand, the control group received no treatment. Here, the teaching and learning process was done by applying conventional instruction in which the teacher gave the writing topic and asked students to write directly without any use of ICT media.

Further, the same writing test was performed after the treatment in both experimental and control group to compare and figure out whether their writing performance improved. Here, a scoring rubric was provided for the three raters to grade students' writing test.

In addition, a semi-structured interview was also conducted. Through convenience sampling, four participants were selected to be interviewed to find out their perceptions of using Canva in the writing process. Mackey and Gass (2005) believed that convenience sampling was a non-random method of sampling used to select individuals for study. It is important to note that the researchers designed the interview items and two raters reviewed them. Each interview lasted for about 20-30 minutes were recorded. Finally, all recordings were transcribed and then coded for analysis.

Finally, the pre-test and post-test data were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics and

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The test normality assumptions were examined before running the ANCOVA. Since the three raters had their own scores, the correlation coefficient of the Pearson product moment was used to measure the reliability of the inter-rater to determine to what extent the raters agreed.

In addition, to explore the merits and demerits of applying Canva in the writing process, the researchers tabulated the responses of the students from a semi-structured interview and provided the frequency and percentage by means of descriptive frequency. Content thematic analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data covering the concepts and the texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As we had 4 sets of scores, including the experimental and control groups' pre-test and post-test, ANCOVA is the best statistical test as it can take into account the pre-tests score too. Correlation analysis was used to test null hypothesis. Since all written scores in both groups were rated by three raters, all these ratings in both groups were correlated to check reliability between raters. All these coefficients of correlation indicated high agreement among the raters. The descriptive statistics of the two groups in terms of their writing scores were calculated after assuring inter-rater reliability.

Tabel 1. *Descriptive statistics (Control class)*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
PreTest	22	1.40	.146	-.086	.491	-.197	.953
PostTest	22	1.21	.138	.303	.491	-.792	.953
Valid N (listwise)	22						

Tabel 2. *Descriptive statistics (Experimental class)*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
PreTest	22	2.35	.402	.372	.491	-.714	.953
PostTest	22	1.78	.335	-1.134	.491	.923	.953
Valid N (listwise)	22						

The findings showed that there was an improvement of the students' writing performance in the experimental group. Yet, to confirm whether the improvement is significant compared to the control group, the post-test of the two groups was compared through Analysis

of Covariance (ANCOVA). In order to run ANCOVA, it is necessary to check several assumptions. The assumption of normality should be firstly confirmed, found to be met on the basis of the ratios of skewness and kurtosis.

The next assumption is related to the homogeneity of variances which was found to be met by Levene's test results in table 3 ($p > .05$). The Levene's score test of error variance is

expressed by statistics $F = 3.96$ with $df = (1,42)$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.053 > 0.05$ or H_0 accepted. Thus, the mean parameter of the three sample data groups has the same or homogeneous variance.

Table 3. *Levene's test of equality of error variances^a*

Dependent Variable: PostTest

F	df1	df2	Sig.
3.968	1	42	.053

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + PreTest + Group

The assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes and the ANCOVA results are shown in Table 4. The table indicates that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes is met; Interaction $F(1,43) = 9.5$, $p > .05$. Moreover, the table also shows that the pre-test effect was $F(1,43) = 15.69$, $p < .05$, and the post-test effect was $F(1,43) = 1.422$, $p < .05$, eta squared = .03

small to medium size. Further, the $F_{\text{count}} = 15.69$; $df = (1, 41)$; with $p\text{-value} = 0.00 < 0.05$, which means that there is a difference in the average writing skill between students using and not using Canva. In other words, there are statistically significant differences on students' writing skills in experimental and control group.

Table 4. *ANCOVA results*
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PostTest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4.370 ^a	2	2.185	45.027	.000	.687
Intercept	.461	1	.461	9.502	.004	.188
PreTest	.761	1	.761	15.693	.000	.277
Group	.069	1	.069	1.422	.240	.034
Error	1.989	41	.049			
Total	104.760	44				
Corrected Total	6.359	43				

a. R Squared = .687 (Adjusted R Squared = .672)

The ANCOVA test revealed that there are statistically significant differences on students' writing skills in experimental and control group. This finding is consistent with those suggesting technology media as a perfect way to promote students' writing skills (Beaufils & Duarte, 2018; Erguvan, 2015; Franco-Camargo & Camacho-Vásquez, 2018; Lam, n.d.). The improvement of students' writing skill in experimental group can be seen as a result of the use of Canva since this kind of visual media can stimulate students to develop their writing ideas. As stated by Suhartono and Laraswati (2016), the application of visual media can help students to get ideas easily.

The findings contributed a significant change that was expected since the teacher provided a

visual media, Canva, that could motivate students to write by providing the stimulus through photographs, graphics, images, photo filters, free icons, shapes, and hundreds of fonts (Canva, n.d.). Canva, the visual media provided through technology, was seen as the potential means to increase the opportunities for students to be actively involved in writing processes. As noted by Tinio (2002) that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides students with digital age literacy, inventive thinking, higher-order thinking skills, effective communication, and high productivity.

Further, the findings support a study by Dunkel (as cited in Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002) which notes that technology enhances students' self-esteem, vocational preparedness,

language skills, learning autonomy and, in particular, immediate feedback. These may be some reasons why technology has contributed positively to the language learning process. It was believed to be the essential and effective tool in writing process for students to feel more creative, including feeling more autonomous in their learning.

In general, with regard to the advantages and disadvantages of using Canva in writing skills, all students admitted that writing experience through Canva is satisfying and fruitful; none of them thought it was inappropriate for writing learning. In the following excerpts, Canva's benefits mentioned by the experimental group students are presented.

Participant 4: I found that the use of Canva helped me to develop my ideas in writing. This media provided many images and color.

Participant 2: The use of Canva gave me interested experience in writing English. I was motivated.

Participant 2: I became very anxious the first time I was about to start writing, but after experiencing the Canva, I become more confident in learning how to write.

Participant 3: The use of Canva was so helpful in writing. It made me easier to write by exploring the idea through the provided images.

Participant 1: I could create my own writing and the Canva images reinforced my idea of writing.

Participant 1: The reader was interested in reading my text.

Conversely, the following excerpts focused on the disadvantages of using Canva as stated by the participants.

Participant 2: The use of Canva cannot give feedback on my writing.

Participant 4: The use of Canva has not corrected my errors in grammar and parts of speech.

Participant 1: This software did not provide a tool for interactive writing.

Participant 2: I was confused how to use this Canva to write collaboratively.

The qualitative results of the students' voice regarding the advantages of using Canva on students' writing revealed some elements, namely helping to develop the idea, motivating, being confident, being creative, as well as making readers interested in reading the text and making it easier for them to understand the meaning of the written text. These findings are consistent with National Student Education Technology Standards (NETS-S) which specifically outlines expectations for students who use technology to guide their learning. The expectations included creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, fluency in research and information, critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making (Smaldino, *et al.*, 2015).

The use of Canva use was believed to support learning process, including in writing class. Research finding showed that as a visual media, Canva focused on learning activity centered on students to explore their creativity. This finding is in line with Yuyun (2018) who suggested that student-centered teaching learning activities can be done to deepen students' understanding as well as explore their creativity by integrating it with the implementation of the online application, namely Canva.

Yet, this study also found some disadvantages mentioned by the students in using Canva. The participants indicated that during the writing process, Canva is unable to provide feedback and to correct writing errors. They believed that getting feedback and correction are important when they write. Feedback could be given on the exact point in the text, namely incorrect spelling, incorrect word order, incorrect tenses, concord, incorrect form, singular or plural writing (Hyland, 2003). Feedback and correction are seen as the best way to respond to the students' work and have an impact on the quality of their writing. Furthermore, both feedback and correction tell how the text appears and how it can be improved.

The third and the fourth drawbacks are related to Canva which does not provide an interactive writing tool. Students were therefore confused about how to use this Canva collaboratively to write. These findings contrast strongly and sharply with other related studies. Most of them believed that in order to work collaboratively, technology conditions students. Lee (2000), for example, found that Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) provide

the situation for students to work collaboratively in pairs or groups. Furthermore, Haring-Smith (as quoted in Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2004) stated that technology could be the main source of collaborative learning and writing. In addition, Alsubaie and Ashuraidah (2017) considered the good impact of integration in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts between collaborative learning and technology. They said that collaborative and technological skills can be used to develop students with different learning styles, the same tools that offer collaboration can also enhance individual learning. Therefore, it is basically possible to determine the successful learning process through collaborative learning.

In general, the quantitative data analysis described the use of Canva as having a positive impact on the students' writing performance. The students also highlighted some of the advantages, including the disadvantages of using Canva in the writing process. All in all, the research results admitted the valuable effects of using Canva on students' writing process.

CONCLUSION

The results of the ANCOVA test showed that students' writing performance on the post-test was significantly higher than the pre-test. Besides, the study also showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Thus, the null hypothesis formulated is rejected.

With regard to the students' voices towards the use of Canva, it can be noted that students appreciate the use of Canva and believe that Canva offers great advantages in improving their writing performance. Basically, most students mentioned that the use of Canva in writing supports them by providing pictures, color, images, photos, font, and graphics. They were equipped to develop their idea of writing. They believed the use of Canva made them more creative in English writing. By using Canva, they also found the writing process easier. It became effortless to deliver their ideas through Canva as well as making it easy for readers to understand the messages. Finally, students said they were more motivated to write and the use of Canva can lower their anxiety.

Using Canva as a technology media helps students improve the quality of their writing performance. They also get to know how to apply technology to language learning. Furthermore, learning foreign language is believed to be a fun activity for the students.

Overall, students view Canva as a useful and practical learning tool to promote their writing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Research Fund provided by Directorate of Research and Community Service, Directorate General for Research and Development, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of Republic of Indonesia. In accordance with the Research Contract for Fiscal Year 2019, Number: 49/AKM/MONOPNT/2019, Date March 27, 2019.

REFERENCES

- Alsubaie, J., & Ashuraidah, A. (2017). Exploring writing individually and collaboratively using Google Docs in EFL contexts. *English Language Teaching, 10*(10). doi: 10.5539/elt.v10n10p10.
- Beaufils, A. F., & Duarte, J. (2018). To ICT or not to ICT: developing writing skills in an EFL professional training course. *EDULEARN18 Proceedings*. doi: 10.21125/edulearn.2018.1444.
- Erguvan, I. (2015). Kuwaiti undergraduate students' perceptions of ICT in writing classes. *Arab World English Journal, 6*(1), 280–297. doi: 10.24093/awej/vol6no1.22.
- Franco-Camargo, L. F., & Camacho-Vásquez, G. (2018). The impact of wikis & videos integration through cooperative writing tasks processes. *English Language Teaching, 11*(5). doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n5p116.
- Hernandez, R. M. (2017). Impacto de las TIC en la educación: Retos y perspectivas. *Propósitos y Representaciones, 5*(1). doi: 10.20511/pyr2017.v5n1.149.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second language writing*. NY: Cambridge.
- Lam, S. (n.d.). Evaluation of using ICT in teaching tertiary English writing. doi: 10.5353/th_b4413937.
- Lee, K. (2000). English teachers' barriers to the use of computer-assisted language learning. *The Internet TESOL Journal, 6*(12).
- Liu, M., Moore, Z., Graham, L., & Lee, S. (2002). A look at the research on computer-based technology use in second language learning: A review of the literature from 1990-2000. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 34*(3), 250-273.
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research methodology and design*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Makalela, L. (2004). Differential error types in second-language students' written and spoken texts: Implications for instruction in writing. *Written Communication, 22*(4), 368-385.

- Smaldino, S. E., Lowther, D. L., Mims, C., & Russell, J. D. (2015). *Instructional technology and media for learning*. NY: Pearson.
- Suhartono, S., & Laraswati, I. (2016). The use of visual media in teaching writing. *English Education: Journal of English Teaching and Research*, 1(1). doi: 10.29407/jetar.v1i1.274.
- Suwantarathip, O., & Wichadee, S. (2014). The effects of collaborative writing activity using Google Docs on students' writing abilities. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, 13(2), 148-156.
- Tinio, V. L. (2002). Survey of information & communication technology utilization in Philippine public high schools. Retrieved from <http://www.fit-ed.org/downloads/ICT%20Utilization%20Survey.pdf>.
- Wahyuni, E., & Thohiriyah. (2018). Infographic: Avoiding monotony in presenting teaching materials. *Proceedings of 2nd English Language Learning and Literature International Conference (ELLiC)*, 2.
- Wiyaka, W., Mujiyanto, J., & Rukmini, D. (2018). Students' perception on the usefulness of ICT-based language program. *English Language Teaching*, 11(2). doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n2p53.
- Ying, Z. (2018). Exploring construction of college English writing course from the perspective of output-driven hypothesis. *English Language Teaching*, 11(2), 188. doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n2p188.
- Yundayani, A. (2018). Present situation analysis: Students' early characteristics in writing for academic purposes. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 6(2), 119-126. doi: 10.25134/erjee.v6i2.1262.
- Yuyun, I. (2018). Curriculum and technology design: A course to explore technology applications in EFL curriculum design. *Journal of ELT Research*, 3(1), 78. doi: 10.22236/jer_vol3issue1pp78-86.
- Zamel, V. (1982). Writing: The process of discovering meaning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(2), 195-209.
- Zhang, Y. (2018). Exploring EFL learners' self-efficacy in academic writing based on process-genre approach. *English Language Teaching*, 11(6), 115. doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n6p115.

