

Students' Perceptions of Using Padlet as a Learning Tool for English Writing

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of Padlet as a learning tool has changed the traditional method of teaching from teacher-centered to student-centered. This can be seen in the classes where the lecturers have integrated Padlet in their teaching, particularly in English writing class. In this study, Padlet was used as a tool or platform for learning English writing. The aim of this study is to investigate the students' perceptions of the usage of Padlet in learning English writing in the English as Second Language (ESL) tertiary classroom. A total of 60 students from one private college in Penang were asked to complete a survey questionnaire, and 6 of them were interviewed to gather feedback on their perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing. The survey results showed that Padlet is a good learning tool for college students with a mean score of 3.503 (S.D=0.476). The interview analysis showed clearer results. Based on the focus group interview, the students think that Padlet could not assist them to learn English writing, as Padlet only accommodate simple English activities. They have suggested that by adding advanced English programs and activities into Padlet, it will help them to improve the learning process of English writing.

Keywords: Padlet, Learning Tool. Perception. English Writing. ESL context

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1 INTRODUCTION

The emergence and explosion of technology have impacted all industries including Information Technology (IT), communication, education, etc. In the education field, the technology has changed traditional method (teacher-centered) to new method (student-centered) of teaching. This has affected the learning process (Fageeh, 2011). Integration of technology is vital in the student-centered teaching method, as the use of technology as a learning tool makes learning process way easier than before (Yunus & Salehi, 2012).

The learning tool especially Padlet, according to Fageeh (2011), could enhance the students' writing skill. They feel comfortable in using Padlet in their learning process. Yunus and Salehi (2012) agreed that the learning tools, have moved the learning strategies beyond the boundaries of the wall of schools (Yunus & Salehi, 2012). Previous studies have shown that the learning tool appears to be as an important factor in encouraging active learning, enhancing students' creativity, solving problems (Yunus & Salehi, 2012), and developing students' self-concept and effects on their achievement positively (Sivin-Kachala & Bialo, 2000). In learning language, the usage of Padlet as a learning tool is a good way of learning. Language learning such as writing could be done with the integration of Padlet in class activities. Writing skill is important in today's world. It is considered a foundation in language learning (Awaludin, Abd Karim & Mohd Saad, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to focus on improving this skill.

A recent study by DeWitt, Alias, and Siraj (2017) showed that university students use Padlet as a learning tool. Awaludin, Abd Karim and Mohd Saad (2017) have done research on the usage of Padlet in academic writing. This study, however, tries to investigate the students' perception of using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing in the ESL tertiary classroom..

1.1 Research Problem

In this technological era, the most challenging problem faced by lecturers in their classroom is the students' attention span when it comes to their lessons. The students are too distracted by technology. They spend more than 5 hours a day on technological gadgets such as their mobile phone (Pratama, 2017). This situation worsens when, the students become addicted to the mobile phone as it can directly affect their performances in class (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). According to Kuss and Griffiths (2011), the students suffering from this addiction were doing poorly in all subjects, including writing. In order, to cope with this problem, lecturers need to equip themselves with new technology too. Perhaps, by doing this, it will benefit the students in all classes including writing.

The use of technology in the class as a learning tool such as Padlet has found to help students to learn better especially in writing. A research done by DeWitt, Alias, and Siraj (2017), showed that students achieved a good result with the help of Padlet. In the area of English writing, a study by Awaludin, Abd Karim & Mohd Saad (2017) concluded that public university students achieved better grades in English writing after the integration of Padlet in their classroom. Thus, this study seeks to investigate the students' perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool to study English writing in the ESL tertiary classroom.

1.2 Research Questions

In this study, Padlet was used as the learning tool for English writing in the ESL tertiary classroom. This research was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool?
2. What are the students' perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing in the ESL tertiary classroom?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Technology in the Classroom

Lecturers and technology played a significant role in students' lives (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). The usage of technology has changed the daily routine and improved the student's critical thinking skills (Fageeh, 2011). Thomas, Morin and Ly (2015) in their study added that the technology, especially learning tools are beneficial for improving student's critical thinking skills. This learning tools are useful in teaching as these tools keep the students engaged in classroom activities and also promoting critical thinking skills (Thomas, Morin & Ly, 2015).

Over the past few decades, lecturers have been integrating the technology into their teaching methods which helps them in teaching. The method and tools have shifted from the traditional tools of using chalk and a blackboard, to using technologically advanced tools such as Padlet, social networking sites and many more in assisting the lecturers in teaching.

The integration of technological learning tools in the classroom also has made the biggest changes to the teaching method, shifting from being teacher-centered to student-centered (Awaludin, Abd Karim & Mohd Saad, 2017). The results of integrating learning tools in the classroom have brought many benefits to students. The recent study by DeWitt, Alias, and Siraj (2017) showed that the usage of Padlet has help students in enhancing their skills especially in collaboration, interaction and writing (Awaludin, Abd Karim & Mohd Saad, 2017).

The previous studies showed that students are capable in producing longer texts using learning tools (Henry, Castek & Zawilinski, 2012). The students have the opportunities to revise what they have written while using learning tools and produce a good writing (Henry, Castek & Zawilinski, 2012). Therefore, the language lecturers, especially English lecturers who teaches writing tend to integrate learning tools in their classroom. They then, try to integrate methods that motivate students to learn and develop their writing skills enthusiastically (Fageeh, 2011).

2.2 Padlet as a Learning Tool for English Writing

Padlet (<http://Padlet.com>) is a web space where the administrator can add files, links, videos, and more. It allows the user to create various forms of content using their Padlet account. The user, especially the lecturer could develop good content and use it in their classes. Besides that, by using this web space, both lecturer and students can collaborate in a live discussion and share

knowledge among themselves (Klein, 2013). Fuchs (2014) added that the implementation and integration of learning tools in classroom could encourage the whole class to participate in the classroom activities. The lecturers will receive an email from Padlet each time the students responded to their wall (Wood, 2016).

In ESL tertiary classroom setting, Padlet works well with activities such as brainstorming, discussion and project work (Stannard, 2015). Students can learn through Padlet anytime anywhere with any internet-enabled devices such as a smartphone, tablet, and computer with internet connection. There is no software needed to be downloaded in order to use Padlet. Students can then share their works on Facebook, Google+, e-mail or even embedded the URL into their blog (Wood, 2016). Besides that, using Padlet in learning English writing is an interesting method that gives benefits to both the students and lecturers. Awaludin, Abd Karim & Mohd Saad (2017), added that public university students have performed better in English writing ever since they started using Padlet. This tool has also helped the silent (shy) students to express their thought as well.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the two theories of Collaborative Learning Theory and Interactionist Approach. The Collaborative Learning Theory and Interactionist Approach have something in common that related to the usage of Padlet in the field of learning. According to these theories, the important elements of successful teaching and learning are; interaction, motivation, cooperation and enthusiasm (Fageeh, 2011).

The Collaborative Learning Theory emphasizes the interaction between people especially students and lecturers. The interaction is the essential element in collaborative learning (Fageeh, 2011). According to this theory, the lecturer plays a role as a facilitator rather than a teacher in the classroom. Besides that, this theory stressed the collaborative work by the students in achieving the goal of the learning. Padlet provides a platform for the students to collaborate in learning; whereby the students will be able to share their thought and feelings with their classmates. Therefore, Padlet offers the students not only a relaxed environment but also an effective environment in which they are able to exchange and share educative information (Fageeh, 2011).

The basic assumption of the Interactionist Approach is that students can learn through interactions with their friends or peers. The founder of this approach believe that the learning process can be easier when they get input, which should be comprehensible, and then figure out the meaning through negotiation in order to produce output and give feedback. Learners then are able to build their knowledge and their linguistic ability through interaction with others until they achieve the desired level of comprehension (Fageeh, 2011). When applying this approach to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), it is obvious that it can be applied through using Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in which people nowadays like to communicate through synchronous or asynchronous text-based CMC environments either inside or outside the schools (Awaludin, Abd Karim & Mohd Saad, 2017). Many researchers have proved that applying the Interactionist Approach to CMC has achieved positive results when negotiating

with each other because it facilitates communicating among the participants and improves their writing proficiency (Magnan, 2008).

Regarding Padlet, it provides opportunities for learners and their instructors to communicate whenever they want. When they interact with each other to accomplish different tasks or to discuss a particular topic, unlike face-to-face interaction, they have time to think, to correct their mistakes and to equally comment; that is, this can enhance their writing proficiency and composition ability. In summary, it can be concluded that using CMC, particularly Padlet that this study is concerned with, to improve the writing performance is based on many language learning theories (Awaludin, Abd Karim & Mohd Saad, 2017).

3 METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative study supported by a small qualitative component. It employed two instruments which are, survey questionnaire (quantitative) and focus group interview (qualitative). This study aimed to investigate the students' perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool to study English writing in the ESL tertiary classroom.

3.1 Participants

The participants for this study are private college students in Penang. A total number of 60 (17 males, 43 females) students were recruited for this study. All of the participants for this study were diploma students undergoing the Writing and Referencing class (MCD 1033) at the time of the study. The Writing and Referencing class covered the topic of English writing, grammar, sentence structures, paraphrasing and referencing technique. The classes were conducted by utilising two methods, namely, face-to-face and online. For the online classes, students were required to write a 200-word essay and post it on Padlet every week starting from week 3 until week 7. They were asked by the lecturer to read their friend's Padlet and comment on their post during face-to-face classes.

3.2 Instruments

The instrument used for this study are; a survey questionnaire and an interview. The survey questionnaire was adapted from two studies; a) Dewitt, Alias and Siraj (2017) Collaborative Learning: Interactive Debates Using Padlet in a Higher Education Institution and; b) Awaludin, Abd Karim and Mohd Saad, (2017) Perceptions' of the Students in Learning Writing using Padlet. The survey questionnaire was used to answer RQ1 and RQ2. It consists of 32 statements of 5-Point Likert scale questions. The interview questions are:

- *Do you think Padlet would help students in learning?*
- *To what extent do you think Padlet would be used as a learning tool?*
- *Do you think Padlet would help students in learning English writing?*
- *To what extent do you think Padlet would be used as a learning tool in English writing?'*

All of these questions supplemented the quantitative data.

3 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The study was conducted over 12 weeks, from mid-August to the end of November 2018. There were two types of data gathered and used for this study: 1) survey questionnaire data and 2) interview data. All the 60 participants were asked to complete the survey questionnaire on their perception of using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing at the end of week 12. Six participants were randomly selected for a focus group interview based on their willingness to participate. The focus group interview took 30 minutes to get an in-depth understanding of their perception in using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing. All of the interviewed participants were named as Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, Participant D, Participant E and Participant F. The quantitative data was keyed into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and analyzed using descriptive analysis. The qualitative data then was analysed based on interview content.

4 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RQ1- What are the students' perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool?

Based on the results in Table 1, the total mean score is 3.50 (S.D=0.476). The results showed that the students find Padlet as a suitable tool for learning. There are four statements that scored the highest mean score. They are '*learn through collaborative learning with Padlet*' (M=3.70, S.D=0.809), '*learned new concept from the other post on Padlet*' (M=3.65, S.D=.860), '*developed new ideas from the activities on Padlet*' (M=3.62, S.D=0.666) and '*share their idea with their friend*' (M=3.60, S.D=0.494). The results in Table 1, show that there are three statements that scored the lowest mean score. They are; '*I like to see my friends comments on Padlet*' (M=3.38, S.D=0.524), '*activities on Padlet was challenging*' (M=3.30, S.D=0.720) and '*got ideas on the advantages and disadvantages of ICT from the materials posted on Padlet*' (M=3.20, S.D=0.777). This was probably because not so much ICT material was posted on the Padlet by their friends.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool

| No | Statement | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----|--|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | I like to see my friends' comments on Padlet | 3.38 | 0.524 |
| 2 | Padlet enables me to share ideas with my friends | 3.60 | 0.494 |
| 3 | Because of Padlet, my class members are able to reach an agreement | 3.57 | 0.722 |
| 4 | I developed new ideas from the activities on Padlet | 3.62 | 0.666 |
| 5 | I learned new concepts from the other posts on Padlet | 3.65 | 0.860 |
| 6 | I learned through collaborative learning with Padlet | 3.70 | 0.809 |
| 7 | The materials posted on Padlet were clear | 3.50 | 0.792 |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|-------------|--------------|
| 8 | The materials posted on Padlet were useful | 3.52 | 0.792 |
| 9 | The activity on Padlet was challenging | 3.30 | 0.720 |
| 10 | I got ideas on the advantages and disadvantages of ICT from the materials posted on Padlet | 3.20 | 0.777 |
| Overall | | 3.50 | 0.476 |

To supplement the quantitative data, the focus group interview was carried out. The thematic analysis showed all of the 6 participants agreed that Padlet is a tool for learning. The following 3 excerpts are used as an example to illustrate the finding:

Participant A: *“By exchanging information and learning material between both educators and students. Padlet users can also benefit from mind maps and more visual oriented learning material that may suit some students’ learning styles”*.

Participant B: *“Padlet can be used as an online discussion platform, sharing information, distributing task, submitting answer and quiz”*.

Participant D: *“Padlet can be used as a basic learning or a starter pack for students who just enter college”*.

As seen in the excerpt, the participants think Padlet can be a learning tool in terms of exchanging information between students and the lecturers. Participant A, think that by exchanging information between lecturer and student through the usage of the mind map and visual oriented learning material in Padlet, could benefit students in their learning. Participant B, added that not only sharing information, but Padlet was also used as an online platform to distribute tasks among students, submitting the assignment and for quizzes. These showed that Padlet benefits both students and lecturers.

RQ2- What are the students’ perceptions of using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing in the ESL classroom?

Based on the results in Table 2, the total mean score is 3.22 (S.D=0.433). There are four statements that scored highest mean, that are; *‘comfortable using Padlet for English writing’* (M=3.50, S.D=0.624), *‘glad to have my own English Padlet’* (M=3.47, S.D=0.911), *‘always check my sentences before post writing on Padlet’* (M=3.48, S.D=1.017), and *‘comfortable when friends commented on posting in Padlet’* (M=3.50, S.D=0.834). The results showed there are four statements scored lowest mean score, that are; *‘I am more active in checking up meaning of difficult words in the dictionary when involved with the Padlet activities’* (M=2.85, S.D=1.055), *‘I like posting many articles and photos or clips of films on the Padlet’* (M=2.93, S.D=0.954), *‘responding to the comments received on my postings improves my English writing’* (M=3.03, S.D=0.843), and *‘I found it’s not difficult to comment on the postings of my peers’* (M=2.98, S.D=0.854).

Table 2. Students' perception of using Padlet in learning English writing

| No | Statement | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------|--|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | I am glad that I have my own English padlet. | 3.47 | .911 |
| 2 | I feel it is quite easy to create and publish my own padlet. | 3.60 | .785 |
| 3 | I think I have no difficulty in using my padlet. | 3.40 | .827 |
| 4 | I feel comfortable using the padlet for English writing | 3.50 | .624 |
| 5 | Writing in English on padlet was enjoyable and interesting. | 3.23 | .593 |
| 6 | I do not think to learn to write in English on padlet is a waste of time. | 3.12 | .958 |
| 7 | It is fast and convenient to update information on the padlet. | 2.93 | .821 |
| 8 | I like posting many articles and photos or clips of films on the padlet. | 2.93 | .954 |
| 9 | I like to invite my classmates to read my postings. | 3.02 | .770 |
| 10 | Reading the comments and entries of my peers on the padlet helped me to learn and improve my own English writing. | 3.15 | 1.039 |
| 11 | I like making comments on my classmates' posts. | 3.22 | .761 |
| 12 | Responding to the comments received on my postings improves my English writing. | 3.03 | .843 |
| 13 | I found it's not difficult to comment on the postings of my peers | 2.98 | .854 |
| 14 | I like having classmates make comments on my posts. | 3.50 | .834 |
| 15 | I am more careful with my English writing when involved with the padlet activities. | 3.38 | .825 |
| 16 | In general, I feel that my English grammar has somewhat improved since I involved with the padlet activities. | 3.28 | .922 |
| 17 | I learn more new words when reading my friends' postings. | 3.13 | 1.200 |
| 18 | I think it is a good idea to use padlet to practice writing skills in English. | 3.18 | .911 |
| 19 | I don't like to check my English writing when I write on paper. | 3.27 | 1.103 |
| 20 | I always check my sentences before I post my writing on the padlet. | 3.48 | 1.017 |
| 21 | When I write on the padlet, I don't worry about mistakes. | 3.20 | 1.005 |
| 22 | I am more active in checking up meaning of difficult words in the dictionary when involved with the padlet activities. | 2.85 | 1.055 |
| Overall | | 3.22 | 0.433 |

The thematic analysis of the focus interview showed a clearer understanding of the usage of Padlet as a learning tool for learning English writing in the ESL context. The participants were

asked the following question ‘*do you think Padlet would help in English writing?*’. The following 3 excerpts is used as an example to illustrate the finding:

Participant A: “*I don’t think Padlet can help student with English writing because of the platform itself is troublesome to use*”.

Participant E: “*Not to an advanced level*”.

Participant F: “*Yes, because Padlet as an online platform which will be posted to public will make you feel uncomfortable and shame if there is a lot of mistakes grammatically or spelling error*”.

The results showed that the usage of Padlet as a learning tool for English writing somehow is not good. The participants think that Padlet will not assist in English writing because the standard of English on the Padlet is not at the advanced level. Besides, Participant F felt that if students post an article with too many grammatical errors, it may affect their reputation. This has supported the statement of ‘*I always check my sentences before I post my writing on the padlet*’ (see Table 2).

Besides that, the participants were asked on ‘*to what extent Padlet would help in English writing?*’. The three following excerpts explained the perceptions of students for using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing in ESL context.

Participant A: “*I think, it can help if the Padlet change their interface*”

Participant B: “*By learning from other users’ strengths in writing styles and mistakes*”.

Participant F: “*Because Padlet as an online platform, easier to search for English word from google to create a better sentence or answer in the Padlet*”.

Based on the thematic analysis of the interview, the participants think that Padlet would be useful as a learning tool for English writing if the creator of Padlet changes its interface. The other participant thinks that Padlet would be a useful tool for learning English writing by reading the postings of their peers. This seemed to agree with the statement of ‘*I learn more new words when reading my friends’ postings*’. It showed that students widen their vocabulary by reading their friends’ postings. The interview analysis showed that Participant F, think that he needs to check the sentence structure in his writing before posting it on Padlet. This has validated the statement of ‘*I always check my sentences before I post my writing on the Padlet*’ in quantitative results.

For the first research question, both quantitative and qualitative results showed that participants (students) agreed that using Padlet as a learning tool benefits them in terms of developing new knowledge and sharing the idea, collaborating and interacting with friends. This finding supported previous research done by DeWitt, Alias, Siraj and Hutagalung (2014). They agreed that padlet had brought new knowledge to its users. DeWitt, Alias, Siraj and Hutagalung

(2014) found that Padlet had enabled the collaboration and interaction between the users. It is a good learning tool to reduce the communication gap among students, peers and their lecturers.

The second research question, the quantitative results showed that Padlet is a learning tool for English writing. This results supported the finding by Awaludin, Abd Karim and Mohd Saad (2017), which stated that students agreed in using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing. Based on Awaludin, Abd Karim and Mohd Saad's (2017) study, the students think that they benefit when using Padlet as a learning tool by doing activities. Zurina Ali, Nabila Abdul Malek, Noor Azlinda Zainal Abidin and Noraisah Nurul Fatwa Mohd Razali (2018) also agreed that students positively think Padlet could improve their writing skills. They mentioned that the students were able to demonstrate the use of Padlet in writing successfully.

The analysis of qualitative data, however, showed a clearer picture of perceptions of students on using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing in ESL classroom. The students think that Padlet could not help them in learning English writing unless the creator of Padlet changes its interface. The analysis of qualitative data revealed that students feel that Padlet is not a good tool for learning English writing, as they only use simple English when doing the activities. This results seemed to agree with An, Aworuwa, Ballard and Williams's (2009) study. They found a similar finding in their study. They also added that because some activities in Padlet were designed as part of independent learning, the students who were not self-regulated or lacked autonomy struggled to use Padlet and it resulted in their negative perceptions of Padlet as a learning tool for English writing.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As a conclusion, Padlet is a good learning tool for lecturers to use and integrate into their teaching. The usage of Padlet as a learning tool for English writing is a good practice in enhancing students' skills in English writing in ESL tertiary classroom. The findings of this study showed that students believed by using Padlet as a learning tool, they have developed new ideas and knowledge from the activities, sharing their ideas with friends, collaborating and interacting with friends. Despite all the positive perceptions toward using Padlet as a learning tool for English writing, the qualitative analysis, however, showed clearer results. The students think that Padlet could not help them in learning English writing unless the creator of Padlet change its interface and use advanced English in the activities. Hence, it is hoped that for future research, researchers could focus on the activities conducted by lecturers in teaching English writing using Padlet. This will add more value to the English writing field.

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