

Utilizing Canva: Illustrative Content for Enhancing Writing Skills of Lower Secondary ESL Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of Canva-based tasks on enhancing the writing skills of lower secondary ESL students and explores their perceptions of the platform as a learning tool. Conducted with 66 students aged 13 to 15 at an international school in Kluang, Johor, the research spanned two academic terms (10 weeks each) and employed a mixed-method approach. Pre- and post-tests evaluated improvements in four writing components—content, communicative achievement, organisation, and language—while semi-structured interviews provided qualitative insights into students' experiences.

Quantitative results revealed statistically significant improvements across all components, with organisation and content showing the most significant gains. The calculated effect sizes confirmed substantial practical significance, emphasising Canva's role in fostering structured, coherent, and linguistically precise writing. Qualitative findings highlighted Canva's ability to enhance student motivation, engagement, and confidence. Participants praised its visual templates and interactive features, making writing tasks less intimidating and enjoyable. Challenges such as initial unfamiliarity and technical limitations were minimal and diminished over time.

The study underscores Canva's transformative potential in ESL writing instruction, particularly for improving idea organisation and addressing linguistic challenges. It contributes to constructivist and multimodal literacy theories by demonstrating how digital tools scaffold learning and promote active engagement. Practical recommendations include integrating Canva into ESL curricula, training teachers for effective use, and addressing infrastructural barriers for equitable access. Future research should consider expanding the sample size to enhance generalizability, explore Canva's applicability to other language skills, and examine its effectiveness across diverse educational contexts, bridging traditional and digital pedagogies to equip students with 21st-century skills.

Keywords: Canva, writing, ESL, technology integration

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill in the academic and professional landscapes, and its importance extends beyond linguistic competence to encompass critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to communicate effectively. For ESL learners, writing often represents the pinnacle of language acquisition challenges. Unlike speaking, which can develop naturally in immersive environments, writing requires deliberate instruction, practice, and feedback. It involves synthesising thoughts, structuring ideas coherently, and presenting them grammatically accurate and stylistically appropriate (Larasati, Rustandi, & Friatin, 2022; Hadi, Izzah, & Paulia, 2021).

In Malaysia, where English is a second language for many students, writing proficiency is a crucial component of the national curriculum. Lower secondary students, typically between 13 and 15, are at a critical

developmental stage where they transition from basic writing exercises to more complex forms, including essays, reports, and reflective accounts. However, many students struggle with content development, organisational coherence, and linguistic precision. Traditional teaching approaches, which often prioritise rote learning and grammatical drills, have proven insufficient in addressing these challenges, leaving students disengaged and underprepared for higher academic demands (Sugiarni, Widiastuti, & Tahrin, 2024).

The integration of digital tools into education has revolutionised teaching methodologies across disciplines. Among these tools, Canva, a user-friendly graphic design platform, has emerged as a promising aid for writing instruction. Allowing users to integrate visuals with textual content, Canva facilitates creative expression and helps students organise their ideas engagingly. Its templates for infographics, presentations, and reports offer students structured yet flexible formats to experiment with, making writing tasks less intimidating and more interactive (Fitria, 2022; Dmitrenko et al., 2024).

Using digital tools in ESL instruction aligns with broader educational shifts toward multimodal literacy. This concept recognises the interplay between text, visuals, and other modes of communication in meaning-making. In the context of writing, multimodal tools like Canva can enhance the learning experience by catering to different learning styles, fostering creativity, and providing opportunities for collaborative work (Ilyas, Syarif, & Refnaldi, 2023; Nhi & Anh, 2024).

Canva's application in writing instruction is particularly relevant for lower secondary students, who are developing their linguistic skills and navigating the complexities of adolescence. This demographic often responds positively to visual and interactive elements in learning, which can help bridge the gap between their intrinsic interests and academic requirements. For instance, tasks like creating infographics or designing visually appealing essays encourage students to think critically about their content while engaging with the creative process (Melinia & Nugroho, 2022).

Studies have shown that integrating digital tools into writing instruction can significantly improve student outcomes. Tools like Canva not only make writing more accessible but also encourage students to take ownership of their work. Students can better understand the importance of structure, coherence, and audience engagement in writing by visualising their ideas and experimenting with design elements. Despite these advantages, research on Canva's application in lower secondary ESL classrooms remains limited, particularly in Malaysia, where its potential to address specific writing challenges has yet to be fully explored (Larasati, Rustandi, & Friatin, 2022; Melinia & Nugroho, 2022).

The challenges of writing instruction for lower secondary ESL students in Malaysia are multifaceted. Firstly, traditional teaching methods often emphasise mechanical aspects of writing, such as grammar and spelling, at the expense of creativity and content development. This approach fails to equip students with the skills to produce well-structured, engaging, and purposeful texts. Secondly, many students struggle with organising their ideas coherently, resulting in writing that is disjointed and difficult to follow. A lack of motivation compounds these issues, as students often perceive writing as a tedious and unrewarding activity.

Digital tools like Canva present an opportunity to address these challenges by making writing instruction more engaging and relevant to students' interests. Canva's visual and interactive features can help students overcome organisational barriers, develop richer content, and engage more deeply with the writing process. However, while Canva has been widely adopted in other educational contexts, its impact on specific writing components—such as content, communicative achievement, organisation, and language—has not been rigorously studied in lower-secondary ESL settings (Hadi, Izzah, & Paulia, 2021; Dmitrenko et al., 2024). Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical data on how students perceive Canva as a learning tool, particularly regarding its usability, engagement potential, and overall effectiveness.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by exploring the Canva application in a Malaysian lower-secondary ESL classroom. It investigates how Canva-based tasks can enhance students' performance in key writing components and provides insights into their perceptions of the platform as an instructional tool.

This research is guided by two primary objectives:

1. To evaluate how Canva-based writing tasks improve students' performance in the four key components of writing: content, communicative achievement, organisation, and language.
2. To explore students' perceptions of Canva as an instructional tool in writing tasks, focusing on its usability, engagement potential, and contribution to their learning experience.

These objectives are interrelated, as improvements in writing performance are often mediated by students' engagement and perceptions of the learning tools employed.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contributions to theory and practice. Theoretically, the study advances our understanding of multimodal literacy and its applications in ESL writing instruction. The research highlights how digital tools can foster creativity and critical thinking in writing by situating Canva within the constructivist framework, emphasising active, student-centred learning.

Practically, the study offers educators a detailed framework for integrating Canva into writing curricula. It provides concrete examples of writing tasks that leverage Canva's features to address common student challenges. For instance, creating infographics helps students condense and organise information and encourages them to consider their audience's needs. Similarly, designing visual essays or reports can make abstract concepts more tangible, aiding comprehension and retention.

The findings of this study also have implications for policymakers. As Malaysia modernises its education system, integrating digital tools into language instruction can align teaching practices with global trends in 21st-century learning. By demonstrating the effectiveness of Canva in improving writing skills and engaging students, this research can inform decisions about curriculum design, teacher training, and resource allocation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework of this study draws upon constructivist learning theories, which propose that learners actively build knowledge through meaningful interactions within their environment. Constructivism, influenced by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, emphasises active learner engagement, collaboration, and connecting new information to prior knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Such principles are integral to writing instruction, requiring students to synthesise ideas, critically reflect, and articulate coherent arguments.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept is particularly relevant for writing instruction. ZPD defines the gap between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance. Digital tools like Canva act as scaffolding within this zone, providing templates, visual aids, and interactive features that facilitate learners' writing processes while supporting creative autonomy. This aligns well with Vygotsky's mediated learning vision (Fitria, 2022; Larasati, Rustandi, & Friatin, 2022).

The study also incorporates multimodal literacy principles, recognising various communication modes—textual, visual, auditory, and spatial—in meaning-making. Writing instruction has expanded beyond traditional methods, encompassing digital texts, multimedia compositions, and infographics. Canva supports multimodal literacy by enabling students to create engaging, multidimensional texts, which is particularly beneficial in ESL contexts, where visual elements enhance linguistic comprehension and expression (Hadi, Izzah, & Paulia, 2021).

Writing remains challenging for ESL learners, demanding high cognitive, linguistic, and cultural competencies. ESL students commonly face difficulties generating ideas, organising content, and adhering to academic writing conventions. Challenges include limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and stylistic inconsistencies (Sugiarni, Widiastuti, & Tahrin, 2024). Additionally, ESL learners must navigate unfamiliar rhetorical structures differing from native language conventions. For instance, Malaysian ESL students often struggle with thesis-driven essay structures prominent in Western academic traditions (Nhi & Anh, 2024).

Traditional ESL writing instruction often prioritises grammar drills over creativity and critical thinking, making disengaged students ill-equipped for modern communication demands. Digital tools like Canva address these gaps by fostering creative, interactive writing tasks and enhancing linguistic skills and critical thinking (Melinia & Nugroho, 2022).

The integration of digital tools into language education has transformed methodologies significantly. Platforms like Canva facilitate personalised learning, collaboration, and diverse resource access, aiding students in generating ideas, organising content, and refining language skills (Hadi et al., 2021). Unlike other collaborative tools such as Google Docs or Padlet, Canva's multimodal capabilities uniquely enable visual and creative communication, enhancing student engagement and writing quality (Jewitt, 2008; Limbong & Wadham, 2024).

Empirical studies highlight Canva's effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and writing performance across various educational contexts. Faqe Abdulla (2024) found that Canva significantly improved motivation and enjoyment in writing among first-year English students at Salahaddin University-Erbil, leading to greater engagement. Similarly, Nurhidayanti et al. (2023) reported that high school students perceived Canva as a valuable tool for developing writing skills, citing its user-friendly interface and creative templates. Harahap and Fahmi (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study, demonstrating that integrating Canva into project-based learning significantly enhanced students' ability to organise and structure their writing. Similarly, Faqih et al. (2023) found that students using Canva in project-based learning activities outperformed those using traditional methods in writing tasks. Furthermore, Fitria (2022) emphasised Canva's role in fostering creativity and engagement in English language learning, reinforcing its effectiveness as a digital tool in ESL classrooms. These studies affirm that Canva is a powerful medium for improving student writing performance through visual scaffolding, structured templates, and interactive design elements.

While previous studies highlight Canva's role in fostering engagement and improving writing performance, few have specifically examined its effectiveness in developing key writing components—content, communicative achievement, organisation, and language. Additionally, there is a lack of research on students' perceptions of Canva as an instructional tool in writing tasks, particularly regarding its usability, engagement potential, and contribution to their learning experience. This study addresses these gaps by evaluating how Canva-based writing tasks enhance students' performance in these four key components and exploring their perspectives on Canva's role in their writing development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the impact of Canva-based writing tasks on ESL learners' writing performance and their perceptions of the platform as a learning tool. Mixed-methods research is particularly effective in education studies as it allows researchers to address complex questions by integrating numerical data with rich, descriptive insights (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative component focuses on pre-and post-tests to evaluate student performance improvements in content, communicative achievement, organisation, and language. The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews to explore students' experiences with Canva-based writing tasks.

This design aligns with the constructivist paradigm, emphasising the role of learners as active participants in constructing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). This study ensures ecological validity and replicability by embedding Canva-based tasks into the regular ESL curriculum over two academic terms (Fitria, 2022).

The participants comprised 66 lower secondary students aged 13–15 from an international school in Kluang, Johor, Malaysia. These students, enrolled in an ESL program, represented diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Their writing proficiency levels ranged from intermediate to upper-intermediate, as assessed by a standardised English placement test.

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of students who met specific criteria, such as consistent attendance, willingness to participate, and prior exposure to basic writing instruction. Ethical considerations were integral to the recruitment process, with informed consent obtained from all participants and their guardians (Bryman, 2016).

The school setting provided access to digital resources, including internet-enabled devices and classrooms with projectors, ensuring that students could effectively engage with Canva during the study (Ilyas, Syarif, & Refnaldi, 2023).

Writing Tasks

Five distinct tasks were designed to evaluate Canva's impact on writing skills, each leveraging the platform's features to address specific writing components. These tasks were integrated into the ESL curriculum over two 10-week academic terms, ensuring consistent exposure to Canva-based activities.

Task 1: Infographic Creation

Students were tasked with creating infographics on the environmental impact of plastic pollution. This activity emphasised conciseness and clarity, challenging students to distil complex information into visually engaging formats. Canva's templates provided scaffolding for organising ideas and integrating textual and visual elements.

Task 2: Presentation Design

Students prepared presentations on energy sources in Malaysia, focusing on organisation and communicative achievement. Canva's slide templates enabled students to structure their ideas logically while incorporating visual aids such as charts and images to enhance audience engagement.

Task 3: Opinion Essay

For this task, students debated the statement, "Sports stars are the best type of people for teenagers to admire and copy. Do you agree?" Using Canva's document templates, students outlined their arguments, developed supporting evidence, and refined their language for clarity and persuasiveness. This task targeted critical thinking and argumentative writing skills.

Task 4: Newspaper Report

Students wrote a newspaper report on a fictional community initiative to reduce plastic waste. Canva's newsletter templates allowed students to simulate real-world reporting, balancing factual accuracy with engaging storytelling. This task emphasised content development and stylistic coherence.

Task 5: Field Trip Reflection

Following a field trip to Pantai Minyak Beku, students designed a reflective report using Canva. The task required students to recount their experiences, describe the environmental issues observed, and propose solutions. By combining narrative and descriptive elements with visuals, the task fostered creativity and expressive writing.

Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure students' writing performance before and after the intervention. Each test comprised a writing prompt to elicit content, communicative achievement, organisation, and language responses. The tests were scored using a rubric aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ensuring standardisation and reliability (Council of Europe, 2020).

The pre-test was conducted in the first week of the study before introducing Canva-based tasks, while the post-test was administered in the final week of the second term. This paired design identified statistically significant improvements in writing performance (Creswell, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 students, selected to represent a range of proficiency levels and engagement with Canva. The interviews, lasting approximately 30 minutes, explored students' perceptions of Canva's usability, engagement potential, and educational value. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The pre-and post-test scores were analysed using paired t-tests to identify statistically significant changes. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were calculated for each writing component. Effect sizes were computed using Cohen's *d* to evaluate the practical significance of the improvements (Cohen, 1988).

Thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Recurring themes were coded and categorised, with particular attention to patterns related to engagement, usability, and perceived learning outcomes. Integrating qualitative insights with quantitative findings ensured a comprehensive understanding of Canva's impact (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the school's research ethics committee. Participants and their guardians were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and potential risks. Written consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences, and all data were anonymised to protect their identities.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The pre-and post-test scores revealed significant improvements across all four writing components. Table 1 summarises each component's mean scores and standard deviations before and after the intervention.

Table 1: Pre- and Post-Test Scores (n=66)

Writing Component	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	p-value
Content	6.5 (1.2)	8.2 (1.0)	+1.7	<0.001
Communicative Achievement	6.0 (1.4)	7.8 (1.1)	+1.8	<0.001
Organization	5.8 (1.3)	8.0 (1.0)	+2.2	<0.001
Language	6.2 (1.1)	7.9 (0.9)	+1.7	<0.001

In terms of content, students demonstrated a deeper engagement with writing prompts, as shown by an increase in the mean score from 6.5 (SD = 1.2) in the pre-test to 8.2 (SD = 1.0) in the post-test. This improvement reflects their enhanced ability to generate richer and more relevant ideas, aligning their responses with the objectives of the tasks. The mean difference of +1.7 points ($p < 0.001$) indicates a statistically significant enhancement in their ability to articulate and elaborate on topics.

For communicative achievement, the mean score increased from 6.0 (SD = 1.4) in the pre-test to 7.8 (SD = 1.1) in the post-test, with a mean difference of +1.8 points ($p < 0.001$). This improvement highlights students' enhanced capacity to meet task requirements, effectively addressing audience and purpose through clear and consistent message delivery.

The most significant improvement was observed in the organisation, where the mean score rose from 5.8 (SD = 1.3) to 8.0 (SD = 1.0), with a mean difference of +2.2 points ($p < 0.001$). This significant gain underscores Canva's role in helping students structure their ideas more logically and cohesively. By using Canva's templates and visual aids, students were better able to create well-organized and coherent narratives, minimising previously observed fragmentation in their writing.

In the language component, the mean score increased from 6.2 (SD = 1.1) to 7.9 (SD = 0.9), with a mean difference of +1.7 points ($p < 0.001$). This reflects notable advancements in grammar, vocabulary, and stylistic coherence. Canva's structured tasks encouraged students to focus on linguistic precision, enabling improvements in sentence construction, word choice, and overall stylistic clarity.

Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to evaluate the practical significance of the intervention. The effect sizes for content (1.48), communicative achievement (1.29), organisation (1.69), and language (1.56) all fall within the range of large effects, underscoring the substantial impact of Canva-based instruction.

Thematic analysis of the interview data identified four significant themes regarding students' experiences with Canva: Increased Engagement and Motivation, Enhanced Confidence and Ownership, Improved Organizational Skills, and Challenges with Technology. Each theme provides a nuanced understanding of Canva's impact on students' learning processes, illustrated with relevant sub-themes and supporting interview excerpts.

Table 2: Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Interviewees
Increased Engagement and Motivation	Creative Freedom	Canva's visual tools made learning interactive, fostering excitement.	R1, R3, R6, R9
	Collaborative Learning	Canva encouraged group collaboration, enhancing teamwork and creativity.	R2, R5, R7, R10
Enhanced Confidence and Ownership	Personalization of Tasks	Customizing outputs increased students' pride and sense of ownership.	R4, R6, R8, R10
	Professional Output	Producing polished work boosted confidence and satisfaction.	R2, R4, R8, R9
Improved Organizational Skills	Structured Guidance	Templates provided a clear framework for organizing ideas.	R1, R3, R5, R8
	Ease of Use	Canva's user-friendly tools simplified task execution.	R3, R6, R8, R10
Challenges with Technology	Technical Issues	Internet and technical difficulties disrupted learning processes.	R1, R4, R7, R9
	Limited Device Accessibility	Shared or limited device access hindered productivity.	R2, R4, R8, R10

Increased Engagement and Motivation

Students reported that Canva made learning more engaging and dynamic by transforming traditional tasks into interactive, creative experiences.

Creative Freedom

R1 highlighted Canva's role in making tasks enjoyable: *"I usually find writing boring, but with Canva, I could add colours and images to my work, which made it exciting."*

R3 mentioned the creative aspects: *"Adding visuals and designs made me feel like I was doing something artistic rather than just writing an essay."*

R6 noted: *"The tools allowed me to express my ideas in new ways. I wanted to work on it more."*

R9 added: *"Using pictures and graphics made the activity fun and different from normal writing."*

Collaborative Learning

R2 explained: *"Working together on Canva made us brainstorm more ideas. We created better work as a team."*

R5 noted: *"It was easier to split tasks. Everyone contributed, and we could see the project come together."*

R7 shared: *"I liked how we could make changes together. It made our group work smoother."*

R10 emphasised: *"It helped us stay organised as a group. Everyone knew their part and could add to the project."*

Enhanced Confidence and Ownership

Students gained confidence in their skills and a sense of pride from creating personalised and polished work.

Personalisation of Tasks

R4 highlighted the value of personalisation: *"Choosing my own fonts, colours, and layouts made the work feel more like mine."*

R6 added: *"I liked that I could design my project in a way that showed my personality."*

R8 shared: *"The ability to customise made me feel like my project was unique and important."*

R10 noted: *"It was exciting to create something that looked exactly how I wanted it to."*

Professional Output

R2 expressed pride in the final product: *"The designs made my work look professional, which gave me more confidence."*

R4 added: *"Seeing the final output made me feel proud because it looked so polished."*

R8 explained: *"The result looked impressive. I felt like I accomplished something significant."*

R9 shared: *"I wanted to show my work to my friends because it looked so professional."*

Improved Organizational Skills

Canva's tools and templates provided structure, enabling students to organise their thoughts and ideas effectively.

Structured Guidance

R1 highlighted Canva's templates as a support tool: *"The templates helped me organise my ideas step by step. It made writing much easier."*

R3 mentioned: *"I liked how the templates gave me a starting point. I wasn't confused about where to begin."*

R5 explained: *"The step-by-step layout guided me to focus on one section at a time."*

R8 emphasised: *"Having a clear framework helped me plan my project better."*

Ease of Use

R3 noted Canva's simplicity: *"The drag-and-drop tools made it easy to put everything together without stress."*

R6 mentioned: *"Even though I'm not very good with technology, Canva was simple and easy to use."*

R8 shared: *"It saved me time because the tools were straightforward."*

R10 explained: *"I could focus more on my ideas since Canva made everything so easy to design."*

Challenges with Technology

Despite Canva's benefits, students faced challenges related to technical issues and device accessibility.

Technical Issues

R1 highlighted internet difficulties: *"Sometimes the internet was slow, and I couldn't finish my work on time."*

R4 mentioned: *"The platform would lag or freeze, which made it hard to complete my project."*

R7 added: *"At first, I found Canva confusing, but I learned how to use it with practice."*

R9 shared: *"It was frustrating when Canva stopped working, and I had to redo parts of my work."*

Limited Device Accessibility

R2 explained the challenge of device sharing: *"I had to wait for my sibling to finish using the laptop so that I couldn't start my project early."*

R4 mentioned: *"Sometimes I couldn't finish on time because I couldn't access a device."*

R8 added: *"Sharing one computer at home made it hard to focus and complete tasks."*

R10 shared: *"I struggled to finish my work because the device was not always available."*

The thematic analysis reveals Canva's significant impact on students' engagement, confidence, and organisational skills. It transformed traditional tasks into creative and structured projects, fostering enthusiasm and pride among learners. However, technical and device accessibility challenges highlight the need for supportive resources to ensure equitable access. Addressing these barriers will further enhance Canva's effectiveness as a learning tool.

The findings of this study highlight Canva's transformative role in enhancing ESL writing instruction by addressing critical challenges such as organisational coherence, linguistic precision, and student engagement. The discussion integrates these findings with relevant literature, providing a nuanced understanding of Canva's effectiveness and its implications for educational practice.

The study revealed significant quantitative gains in writing performance, particularly in the organisation and content components. Organisation scores increased by +2.2 points ($p < 0.001$), reflecting Canva's ability to provide structured scaffolding that supports students in logically organising their ideas. These findings align with Fitria (2022), who emphasised the effectiveness of Canva's templates in helping students plan and structure their writing. Similarly, Dmitrenko et al. (2024) highlighted that Canva's visual aids promote coherent and cohesive writing by offering clear frameworks for idea development.

Qualitative data further support this conclusion. For example, R1 shared, *"The templates helped me organise my ideas step by step. It made writing much easier,"* R3 added, *"The templates gave me a starting point, so I*

wasn't confused about where to begin." These reflections demonstrate how Canva reduces cognitive load by guiding students through the writing process, enabling them to focus on developing richer content.

The scaffolding approach provided by Canva aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where tools and templates act as mediators, helping students accomplish tasks beyond their current abilities (Vygotsky, 1978). This theoretical perspective underscores the importance of structured guidance in facilitating incremental skill development in ESL learners.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings highlights Canva's role in boosting student engagement and motivation, which contributed to notable improvements in communicative achievement (+1.8 points, $p < 0.001$) and language (+1.7 points, $p < 0.001$). Students described Canva-based tasks as more enjoyable and engaging than traditional writing methods. R6 expressed, *"The tools allowed me to express my ideas in new ways, and I wanted to work on it more,"* while R9 noted, *"Using pictures and graphics made the activity fun and different from normal writing."*

These findings align with Larasati et al. (2022), who found that Canva's multimodal features increase students' motivation and confidence in writing tasks. Canva's ability to integrate visuals, text, and design elements caters to diverse learning preferences, particularly for adolescent learners who often struggle with traditional, text-heavy assignments. Jewitt (2008) emphasises the role of multimodal literacy frameworks in enriching students' communication by blending text and visuals, fostering creativity and deeper engagement.

Furthermore, increased motivation has been linked to higher levels of effort and improved learning outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000, as cited in Creswell, 2014). By transforming writing into a creative and interactive activity, Canva fosters intrinsic motivation and creates a more positive learning environment that supports sustained engagement and performance.

While Canva demonstrates clear benefits, this study identified significant technical challenges related to unreliable internet connectivity and limited device availability. These findings align with Sugiarni et al. (2024), who emphasised addressing infrastructural barriers to ensure equitable digital access. Students in this study frequently experienced frustration due to slow internet speeds, exemplified by participant responses such as, *"Sometimes the internet was slow, and I couldn't finish my work on time"* (R1), and constraints in device accessibility, as stated by another student: *"Sharing a computer with my siblings made it hard to focus and complete tasks"* (R8).

Teachers could implement several strategies to address these issues practically from an instructional perspective. For instance, educators might provide Canva templates and assignments that students can pre-download and use offline, reducing dependency on continuous internet access (Graham et al., 2019; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Additionally, organising Canva activities into collaborative group tasks could optimise limited devices, promoting resource sharing and teamwork (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Fitria, 2022). Educators could also adopt a blended learning approach, mixing traditional writing instruction with digital tasks, ensuring continuity in cases of technological disruption (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). These teacher-focused strategies offer practical solutions to technical barriers, enhancing the effective integration of Canva into ESL classrooms despite infrastructural limitations (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Sugiarni et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate the transformative potential of integrating Canva into ESL writing instruction. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses reveals that Canva-based tasks significantly enhance students' writing skills while fostering positive attitudes toward the writing process.

Quantitative analysis of pre- and post-tests highlighted substantial improvements across all four assessed components of writing: content, communicative achievement, organisation, and language. Students engaged

more with writing prompts, resulting in richer and more relevant ideas. The alignment of their outputs with task requirements improved, showcasing an enhanced understanding of audience and purpose. The most significant gains were observed in the organisation, where Canva's templates and visual aids provided scaffolding to structure ideas effectively. Students also demonstrated notable progress in language use, as reflected in improved grammar, vocabulary, and stylistic coherence. These improvements were not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful, with large effect sizes confirming the substantial impact of the intervention.

Qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews further reinforced these findings, revealing positive student perceptions of Canva's usability, engagement potential, and educational value. Students described Canva-based tasks as engaging and enjoyable, attributing this to the platform's visual and interactive features. Many noted that these tasks made writing feel less like a chore and more like a creative and rewarding activity. The structured guidance offered by Canva's templates boosted students' confidence and ownership of their work, enabling them to present their ideas with greater clarity and pride. For example, students shared that creating infographics and presentations helped them better organise and articulate their thoughts, directly influencing their writing quality. Despite these positive outcomes, some challenges were noted, such as technical difficulties, limited internet access, and a learning curve associated with becoming familiar with the platform.

Integrating quantitative and qualitative findings highlights the complementary nature of the observed outcomes. While quantitative results objectively confirmed the improvement in key writing components, qualitative data provided context, illustrating how increased engagement and motivation contributed to these gains. Students' reflections on how Canva facilitated their learning corroborated the statistical evidence, particularly regarding enhanced organisational skills and content development.

Overall, the findings align with constructivist learning theories, particularly Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, demonstrating how Canva is a mediating tool that scaffolds students' writing processes. The platform's multimodal capabilities also support theories of literacy that emphasise the integration of text and visuals for effective meaning-making. By fostering an engaging and interactive learning environment, Canva addressed common challenges in ESL writing and encouraged students to explore and express their ideas more effectively, marking it as a valuable asset in modern educational practices.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical, providing valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

Theoretically, the study contributes to understanding constructivist pedagogy and multimodal literacy. It illustrates how digital tools like Canva can scaffold meaningful learning experiences, enabling students to construct knowledge through active engagement and multimodal expression. The findings validate Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, emphasising the importance of scaffolding in helping learners achieve tasks beyond their independent capabilities. Furthermore, the study underscores the relevance of multimodal literacy theories, demonstrating how integrating text and visuals can enhance students' meaning-making processes. Additionally, it aligns with self-determination theory by highlighting the role of motivation and engagement in learning, showing how Canva's interactive and visually rich interface fosters autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are crucial for intrinsic motivation.

Practically, the study provides actionable recommendations for various stakeholders. Educators are encouraged to leverage Canva's features to design targeted tasks that address specific writing challenges. For instance, infographic tasks can teach conciseness, while presentation designs can enhance organisational and communicative skills. Visual scaffolding, such as essay templates, can guide students in effectively structuring arguments. To maximise the benefits of these tasks, professional development programs should train teachers in task design, platform navigation, and strategies to address potential technical challenges.

Curriculum developers should embed Canva-based activities into ESL syllabi, ensuring alignment with learning outcomes and assessment criteria. By incorporating multimodal tasks, curricula can foster 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. Flexibility should be built into the curriculum to allow teachers to adapt Canva-based tasks to meet their students' needs and proficiency levels.

Policymakers should recognise the value of integrating digital tools like Canva into modern education systems. Investments in infrastructure, such as high-speed internet and access to devices, are essential for equitable implementation. Policymakers should also prioritise teacher training in digital pedagogy, ensuring educators can integrate these tools effectively.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the sample size of 66 students limits the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples to improve external validity.

Second, the intervention spanned only two academic terms, which may not capture the long-term effects of Canva-based instruction on writing proficiency. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the sustainability of the observed improvements.

Third, the study focused on a single educational context—an international school in Kluang, Johor. Replicating the study in different settings, such as rural schools or institutions with varying access to technology, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of Canva's applicability and impact.

This study opens several avenues for future research that could broaden the understanding of Canva's educational potential and its application in diverse contexts. While the present research focused exclusively on writing, future studies could explore Canva's impact on other language skills, such as speaking and reading. Researchers could provide a more holistic view of Canva's capabilities in language education by investigating its effectiveness across these domains. For instance, studies could evaluate whether Canva's visual and design tools enhance students' oral presentations or support their comprehension of complex texts, expanding its utility beyond writing.

Longitudinal studies are also needed to examine the long-term effects of Canva-based instruction. While this research demonstrated significant short-term improvements in writing skills, it remains unclear whether these gains are sustained over time. Extended studies could track students' progress over multiple academic years, providing insights into how consistent use of Canva impacts their overall writing proficiency and attitudes toward learning. Such research would be instrumental in determining whether the platform fosters enduring improvements or if its effects diminish without continued reinforcement.

Another promising direction involves comparative studies that evaluate Canva against other digital tools used in educational settings. Researchers could highlight its unique strengths and limitations by comparing Canva's features, outcomes, and usability with tools like Google Docs or Microsoft Sway. This comparative approach would help educators decide which tools to integrate into their classrooms based on specific learning objectives and contextual needs.

Teacher perspectives on Canva represent another crucial area for exploration. While this study centred on student outcomes, understanding teachers' experiences with the platform could provide valuable insights into its practical challenges and opportunities. Research focusing on educators could examine their perceptions of Canva's ease of use, alignment with curricular goals, and impact on their teaching practices. Such studies could also identify barriers to implementation, such as insufficient training or limited access to technology, and propose solutions to address these issues.

Finally, future research should investigate Canva's scalability and adaptability in diverse educational contexts. Conducting studies in rural, underserved, or non-English-dominant settings would provide a more nuanced understanding of Canva's performance in environments with varying technological access and language

proficiency levels. These investigations could identify strategies for ensuring Canva remains accessible and effective across different socio-economic and linguistic landscapes, broadening its relevance and impact in global education.

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