

Usability of a Product Review Website: ESL Pre-Diploma Students' Insights

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ABSTRACT

Usability of a website can significantly enhance website quality and satisfy website users' needs. The use of websites in education should apply user interfaces that are both easy to learn and easy to use. Empirical studies revealed that the integration of digital technologies into English as a Second Language (ESL) education offers numerous advantages for ESL students. Teaching and learning activities will be more effective and engaging using websites. Furthermore, students can easily obtain information anytime and anywhere, understand the materials easily, and enhance their English language acquisition by utilising websites in their studies. This study aimed to examine ESL pre-diploma students' insights about the usability of a newly developed website, LCC004: Mastering the Product Review. Unlike other English educational websites and applications, the website was designed for ESL pre-diploma students learning product review writing using simple and compound sentences. The study involved 28 pre-diploma students at a public university in Malaysia. To evaluate the usability features of the website, an online survey was conducted to collect responses from students. Results showed that accessibility, loading speed, access to information and materials received the highest usability ratings.

Keywords: Digital Technologies, ESL Pre-Diploma Students, Language Acquisition, Product Review Writing, Website Usability

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the use of technology in English language education has increasingly become important. In the digital transformation of higher education, websites provide exciting opportunities for users to easily access and engage with digital content with an interactive interface (Arya Asok & Rekha, 2025). In addition, integrating websites into English language classrooms can foster students' engagement and motivation. As stated by Azrina (2026), digital learning platforms offer flexibility and convenience for students to learn and improve their English language beyond the classroom. Furthermore, educational resources are widely disseminated, and pedagogical methods have become both more diversified and personalised using digital tools including websites (Jie & Zhou, 2024).

The Pre-Diploma Programme is a university initiative that provides a special academic pathway for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) graduates who do not meet the minimum entry requirements for admission to a public university in Malaysia, especially Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) (Government of Malaysia, 2025). One of the courses offered under this programme is English Proficiency for Pre-Diploma IV (LCC004), which aims to enhance students' English proficiency from CEFR A1 (High) to CEFR A2 (High) through the integration of business-related situations. As part of the course, students learn to write product reviews using simple and compound sentences based on an authentic picture in a business context. In Malaysia, there are extensive amounts of English applications and websites but to support pre-diploma students in learning how to write product reviews, the LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website was developed based on the syllabus to offer seamless access to product review writing information and interactive activities. By using the website, students can access information anytime and anywhere.

There are several things to consider when creating a new website for educational purposes. Basically, an educational website should look attractive and contain relevant materials or information to help students achieve the learning outcomes. Importantly, another crucial aspect to build a quality website is evaluating its usability. Usability is one of the key aspects determining the success of any website, which refers to the degree of ease of use or how easy the website is to use (Jilani et al., 2026). Preece, Rogers and Sharp (2015) defined usability as the quality of users' experiences when using the digital technologies, that assesses the easiness of the user interface. Alqurni (2023) suggested that a user-friendly interface and good usability can enhance students' learning experiences and engagement. Understanding students' insights into digital technologies interfaces and usability strategies can also improve learning outcomes (Alqurni, 2023).

A plethora of research has been conducted on usability of websites, software development, and mobile apps (Alqurni, 2023), however there is a lack of research conducted to investigate the usability of LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website for ESL pre-diploma students in the context of Malaysian higher education. Thus, the main objectives of this research are to investigate students' perceptions of the usability and areas for improvement of the product review website, LCC004: Mastering the Product Review. Understanding students' perspectives of the usability of the website is important for improving the quality of the website. The current study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What did ESL pre-diploma students perceive about the usability of LCC004: Mastering the Product Review?
2. What did ESL pre-diploma students recommend to improve the quality of the website?

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY

Product Description

The LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website was developed based on the ADDIE instructional design model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation). The developer utilised Canva to create the website because it provides customisable templates and multimedia features that support the integration of visual and interactive learning materials.

The website was developed to help Malaysian ESL pre-diploma students enhance their product review writing using simple and compound sentences. It provides useful content on simple and compound sentences, authentic product review examples that were taken from Shopee and Google Review, colour-coded sentence components to aid visual learning, and interactive reinforcement exercises.

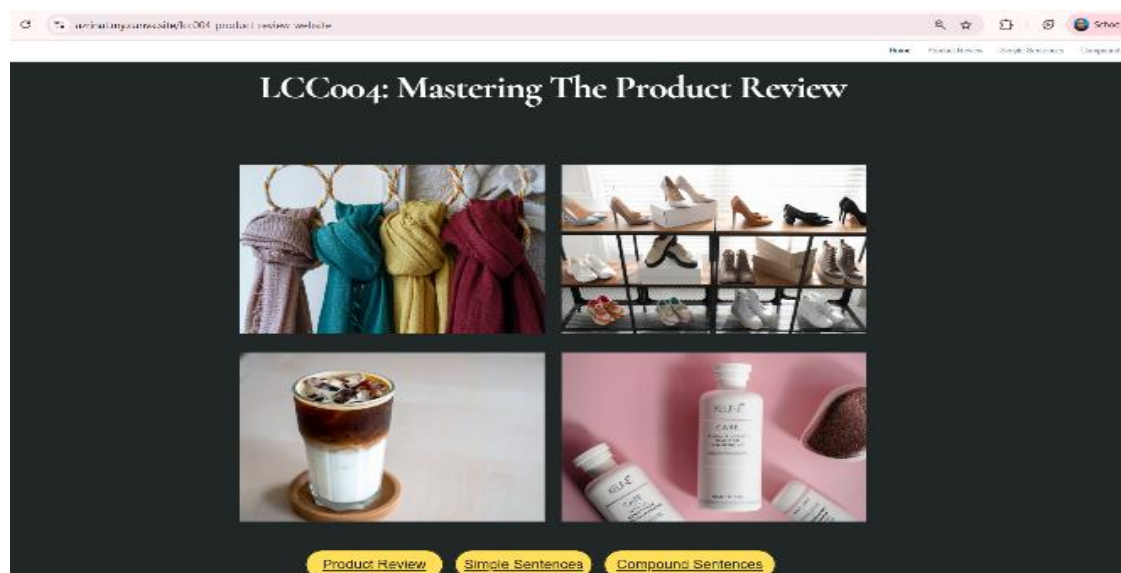


Figure 1: Homepage of LCC004: Mastering the Product Review

What is a compound sentence?

- A compound sentence generally **joins two simple sentences** together using a **coordinating conjunction**.
- You can use words or connectors such as **'and', 'but', 'or' and 'because'** to join or link the ideas.
- These are called **connectives**.

main clause **coordinating conjunction/connector** main clause

- For example:

1) Using **'and'** (adding more details or extra information to support the information given in the first part of the sentence)

- The phone is very small **and** it is very light.
- The camera takes great photos **and** the screen is big.



Figure 2: LCC004: Mastering the Product Review Content Page

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, the research administration, survey design, and data analysis will be discussed.

Research Administration and Survey Design

The main objectives of this study were to investigate students' insights of the LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website's usability and examine their suggestions to improve the quality of the website. The research employed a nonprobability convenience sampling method to collect data from ESL pre-diploma students. Twenty-eight participants (male= 12, female = 16) participated in the study. They ranged in age from 19 to 25 years. This research was conducted during the period of March 2026 to July 2026.

Data were collected using a questionnaire developed with Google Forms to elicit participants' views on the website's usability and recommendations to enhance the website quality. The questionnaire was adapted from Alqurni (2023) and Emang et al. (2017) which comprised of 3 sections and has a total of 17 questions. The usability items demonstrated excellent internal consistency in the present sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = .952$). Five-point Likert scale was used to examine students' perspectives of usability of LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website anchored as "strongly disagree=1" to "strongly agree=5". The final section of the survey was composed for students' suggestions to improve the website as open-ended questions.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis (the mean and standard deviation) was carried out to explore the participants' perspectives of usability of LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website. Besides, an inductive thematic approach was used to analyse data from the open-ended questionnaire items. Then, initial coding was employed to identify recurring patterns in participants' responses, which were then grouped into broader themes such as desired functions and resource integration, visual design and readability, performance and functionality, navigation and information access, and interactivity. Key themes were supported with direct participant quotes using participant codes such as P1 and P2 to support the findings of the study.

FINDINGS

This section discusses the results and discussion of the study according to the research questions.

What did ESL pre-diploma students perceive about the usability of LCC004: Mastering the Product Review?

Table 1 shows the proportion of respondents’ choices for each question item related to accessibility and loading speed, access to information and materials, layout and navigation, colour scheme, button and link functionality, and text readability.

As indicated in Table 1, most students agreed (57.1%) and strongly agreed (32.1%) that the website was easy to access, loaded quickly on their devices, and provided easy access to information that they required (both $M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.85$). In addition, 64.3% of the students agreed and 25% strongly agreed that the colour composition of the website was suitable for learning ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.81$). Furthermore, 78.6% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that the website layout was clean, navigation was easy to use as well as the buttons and links worked perfectly without any technical errors. ($M=3.96$, $SD=0.88$). Finally, 85.7% of these students agreed and strongly agreed that the text font size and colours were clear and easy to read ($M=4.21$, $SD=0.92$). The findings suggested that students found the website easy to use for learning product review writing.

Table 1: Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Agreement Rates for the Website Usability

Usability Item	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Agreement (%)
Accessibility and loading speed	4.14	0.85	89.3%
Access to information and materials	4.14	0.85	89.3%
Layout and navigation	3.96	0.88	78.6%
Colour scheme	4.07	0.81	89.3%
Button and link functionality	3.96	0.88	78.6%
Text readability	4.21	0.92	85.7%
Overall perceived usability	4.08	0.78	85.1%

What did ESL pre-diploma students recommend to improve the quality of the website?

The second research question examined the students’ insights regarding the areas for the website improvement. There are five themes:

Theme 1: Resource Integration

The most frequently mentioned theme in this study is resource integration. Eight participants suggested that additional educational platforms and resources should be incorporated into the LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website such as YouTube, Google Classroom, Canva, online dictionaries, British Council LearnEnglish, and Google Forms quizzes. For instance, P15 recommended the website to include other English learning resources such as the “British Council.” Another participant proposed incorporating Google Forms quizzes into the website to help students complete the activities more conveniently (P22). These recommendations indicated that participants wanted the website to serve as a more comprehensive learning platform by providing direct access to other educational resources.

Theme 2: Visual Design and Readability

Six participants recommended improvements to the website’s visual design and readability such as a dark-mode option, use more vibrant colours, improve text presentation, and enhance the design. As commented by P2, “having a dark mode would be nice just in case someone reads it at nighttime.” Similarly, P18 stated, “I think that the website should be more colourful,” while P21 recommended a “more attractive design.” These

responses suggested that participants generally preferred a more visually engaging and flexible interface. Although visual attractiveness is primarily an aesthetic consideration, features such as dark mode, readable text, and appropriate colour contrast may also influence reading comfort and perceived usability.

Theme 3: Performance and Functionality

Three participants stated that performance and functionality of the website should be improved including page-loading speed, search functionality, and login reliability. P23 mentioned that “the loading speed of some pages could be improved for a smoother browsing experience.” Moreover, P8 recommended improving the loading speed and search function to help users find products more quickly and smoothly. The findings indicated that technical performance and reliable website functions are important for website users to experience smooth browsing experience.

Theme 4: Navigation and Information Access

Two participants suggested that the website’s navigation and information-access features could be improved. P11 specifically identified “the navigation system” as an area requiring further attention. In addition, P8 recommended improving the search function, so users could locate relevant information more quickly. Although most participants rated the website’s navigation positively in the closed-ended questionnaire, these qualitative responses revealed specific aspects that could still be refined. Improving the organisation of menus, search functions, and links may help users locate the required information with fewer difficulties.

Theme 5: Interactivity

Only one participant commented about interactivity. The participant suggested that students should be allowed to complete exercises directly on the website. P24 recommended that “make the website interactive so that students could fill in their answers on the exercises.” This recommendation indicated a preference for active participation rather than merely reading information. The participant believed that incorporating immediate feedback for example, could potentially improve the website’s functionality and make the learning activities more interactive.

However, it is also important to note that four participants explicitly indicated that the website did not require further improvement. For example, P4 stated, “I don’t think anything should be changed,” while P20 commented that the existing website was sufficient because it was easy to understand.

Overall, the five themes provide formative guidance for improving the website’s resource integration, visual presentation, technical performance, navigation, and interactivity.

Potential Scalability and Practical Applications

The website may have potential as a supplementary self-access resource for other pre-diploma English classes and UiTM campuses. However, the present small-scale evaluation did not establish its scalability, commercial viability, or effectiveness in improving students’ product review writing performance. Broader technical, pedagogical, and learning-effectiveness validation is required before large-scale implementation.

NOVELTY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Unlike other English educational websites and applications, the LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website was specifically designed for ESL pre-diploma students at a public university in Malaysia to learn about product review writing using simple and compound sentences. Importantly, the website is aligned with the English Proficiency for Pre-Diploma IV (LCC004) current syllabus which cater CEFR A1 (high) to CEFR A2 (high) levels.

The results showed that generally, the LCC004: Mastering the Product Review is easy for students to use in learning the product review writing. Students liked the website, but they suggested that the website should be

improved in the areas of desired functions and resource integration, visual design and readability, performance and functionality, navigation and information access, and interactivity. The students' feedback is useful for the website's improvement, but future study should incorporate observational method, model-based evaluation, classroom-based trials with ESL pre-diploma students from different classes and campuses as well as obtain experts' evaluations to enhance the quality of LCC004: Mastering the Product Review website. Despite the insights generated by this study, this study has some limitations that must be acknowledged. First, a small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. The study was not designed to measure students' learning outcomes but rather examine students' insights of a newly developed website. Hence, conclusions should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive. Furthermore, this study explored 28 ESL pre-diploma students' opinions of usability of the website, thus the findings may not fully reflect how pre-diploma students would experience utilising it. Experts' evaluations could provide a comprehensive review since they are more professional, knowledgeable and experienced in this field of study.

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