

Enhancing EFL Students' Recount Writing through Canva-Assisted Multimodal Learning: A Descriptive Qualitative Study at Junior High School Level

Nurmahyuni AsrulEnglish Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Prima Indonesia, Medan, Indonesia
nurmahyuniasrul@unprimdn.ac.id**Berlin Sibarani**English Applied Study Program, Language and Art Faculty, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan
berlin.sitiotio@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the integration of Canva as a digital learning tool to enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' recount writing skills at the junior high school level. The study was conducted at SMP Shafiyatul Amaliyyah and involved 30 seventh-grade students engaged in Canva-based writing projects. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, documentation of students' written products, and open-ended questionnaires. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that Canva fostered higher student engagement, improved organization of recount texts, stimulated creative expression, and enhanced learners' confidence in writing English. Although challenges such as limited internet access and vocabulary constraints were observed, Canva proved to be an effective pedagogical tool when supported by appropriate instructional scaffolding. This study contributes to EFL writing pedagogy by providing qualitative evidence on the role of digital multimodal tools in genre-based writing instruction.

Keywords: Canva, EFL Writing, Recount Text, Qualitative Study, Digital Learning

ABSTRAK

Penelitian kualitatif ini mengkaji integrasi Canva sebagai media pembelajaran digital untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis teks recount siswa dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di SMP Shafiyatul Amaliyyah dengan melibatkan 30 siswa kelas tujuh yang mengikuti kegiatan menulis berbasis Canva. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dokumentasi hasil tulisan siswa, dan kuesioner terbuka. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan Canva mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, memperbaiki pengorganisasian teks recount, mendorong ekspresi kreatif, serta meningkatkan kepercayaan diri siswa dalam menulis Bahasa Inggris. Meskipun ditemukan beberapa kendala seperti keterbatasan akses internet dan penguasaan kosakata, Canva terbukti menjadi media pedagogis yang efektif apabila didukung oleh scaffolding pembelajaran yang tepat. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pedagogi penulisan EFL dengan menyajikan bukti kualitatif mengenai peran media digital multimodal dalam pembelajaran menulis berbasis genre.

Kata kunci: Canva, Menulis EFL, Teks Recount, Penelitian Kualitatif, Pembelajaran Digital

A. Introduction

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most demanding skills in English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly for junior high school students who are still developing their linguistic competence (Hyland, 2003). Students are

expected to generate ideas, organize information coherently, and apply appropriate grammatical structures simultaneously, which often leads to anxiety and low motivation (Graham & Perin, 2007). In many EFL classrooms, writing instruction remains teacher-centered and heavily dependent on textbooks or worksheets, resulting in limited opportunities for students to engage creatively with written language.

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed educational practices and created new opportunities for enhancing language learning. Digital tools that integrate visual, textual, and interactive elements have been shown to increase learner engagement and support deeper learning processes (Mayer, 2009). In EFL contexts, such tools can reduce writing anxiety by shifting students' focus from linguistic accuracy to meaning construction (Krashen, 1982).

Canva is a web-based graphic design platform that provides users with templates, images, and layout features that can be adapted for educational purposes. Previous studies indicate that Canva supports creativity and motivation in writing activities by offering multimodal resources that facilitate idea development (Teng, 2021; Al-Shehri & Al-Qarni, 2021). However, most existing research focuses on general writing improvement or higher education contexts, leaving a gap in studies that examine Canva use in genre-based writing instruction at the junior secondary level.

Within genre-based pedagogy, recount text is a foundational genre introduced in junior high school curricula. Genre-based instruction emphasizes understanding the social purpose, schematic structure, and linguistic features of texts (Hyland, 2007). Integrating Canva into recount writing allows students to visualize event sequences and organize narratives more effectively, potentially supporting both cognitive and affective aspects of writing development.

Given these considerations, this study aims to explore qualitatively how Canva is implemented in EFL recount writing instruction and how it influences students' engagement, writing development, and learning experiences.

B. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the role of Canva in enhancing EFL students' recount writing skills. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating classroom practices and learner experiences in natural settings without experimental manipulation (Creswell, 2014).

The participants were 30 seventh-grade students of SMP Shafiyiyatul Amaliyyah, selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to focus on participants who had direct experience with Canva-based writing activities, ensuring the relevance and richness of the data (Patton, 2002).

Data were collected through multiple techniques to achieve triangulation and enhance credibility (Denzin, 1978). Classroom observations were conducted to examine student engagement, interaction patterns, and learning behavior during Canva-based writing lessons. Semi-structured interviews with selected students and the English teacher explored perceptions, challenges, and perceived benefits of Canva integration. Documentation of students' recount writing products provided tangible evidence of writing development, while open-ended questionnaires captured students' reflections on usability, motivation, and confidence.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Ethical considerations were maintained by obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing voluntary participation throughout the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

C. Result and Discussion**Student Engagement in Canva-Based Recount Writing Activities**

This section discusses students' engagement during Canva-based recount writing activities as observed throughout the learning process. Student engagement is considered a crucial indicator in qualitative classroom research, as it reflects learners' motivation, participation, and responsiveness to instructional strategies (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). In EFL writing contexts, increased engagement often signals reduced writing anxiety and greater willingness to express ideas (Hyland, 2003).

Classroom observations revealed that most students demonstrated active involvement when Canva was integrated into recount writing lessons. Students appeared more attentive, participated actively in group discussions, and showed enthusiasm in designing their written texts using Canva templates. This finding aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes learners' active role in constructing knowledge through meaningful activities (Vygotsky, 1978).

To illustrate the pattern of student engagement observed during the learning activities, Table 1 presents a descriptive summary of students' engagement levels.

Table 1. Students' Engagement Levels during Canva-Based Writing Activities

Engagement Level	Number of Students	Description
Highly Engaged	20	Active participation, collaboration, and sustained attention
Moderately Engaged	8	Participation with occasional teacher guidance
Low Engagement	2	Limited participation due to technical or

		motivational issues
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As shown in Table 1, the majority of students (20 out of 30) were categorized as highly engaged during Canva-based writing activities. These students actively collaborated with peers, explored visual elements, and contributed ideas to the writing tasks. This high level of engagement suggests that Canva's multimodal features—such as images, layouts, and color customization—successfully captured students' attention and encouraged active participation. Similar findings have been reported by Teng (2021), who found that digital design platforms can significantly enhance learner engagement and motivation in EFL writing classrooms.

Students categorized as moderately engaged still participated in the activities but required occasional scaffolding from the teacher, particularly in organizing ideas or selecting appropriate vocabulary. Meanwhile, the small number of students with low engagement were primarily affected by technical issues and limited digital familiarity. These findings indicate that while Canva is effective in promoting engagement, teacher guidance remains essential to ensure inclusive participation.

Development of Students' Recount Writing Skills

Beyond engagement, this study also examined how Canva influenced students' recount writing development, particularly in terms of organization, vocabulary use, creativity, and grammatical awareness. In genre-based writing pedagogy, these aspects are critical, as recount texts require clear chronological organization and appropriate language features (Hyland, 2007).

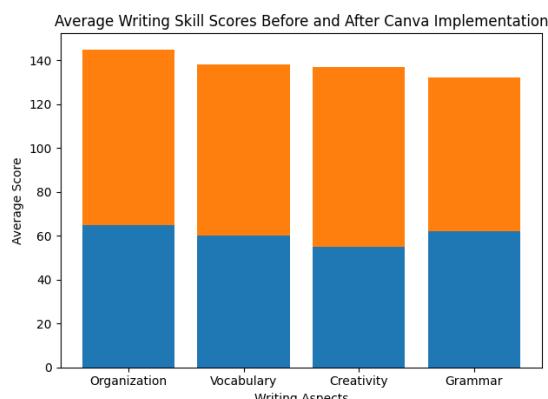


Figure 1. Average Writing Skill Scores Before and After Canva Implementation

Figure 1 shows improvements across all writing aspects, particularly in organization and creativity, suggesting that Canva supported students in structuring and expressing ideas more effectively.

Analysis of students' written products showed noticeable improvements in the overall structure of recount texts. Students demonstrated a clearer understanding of orientation, sequence of events, and reorientation. Canva templates functioned as visual scaffolding that guided students in organizing their ideas systematically. This supports Hyland's (2007) argument that explicit scaffolding helps learners internalize genre conventions more effectively.

The improvement in creativity was evident in students' use of visual elements to support their text. By combining images and text, students were able to generate ideas more easily and express personal experiences more meaningfully. According to Mayer's (2009) multimedia learning theory, combining visual and verbal information can enhance cognitive processing and comprehension, which explains the observed improvement in students' writing quality.

Students' Perceptions and Affective Responses

In addition to cognitive development, students' affective responses toward writing were also explored through

questionnaire data. Affective factors such as confidence and anxiety play a significant role in EFL writing performance (Krashen, 1982). Figure 2 illustrates these affective responses.

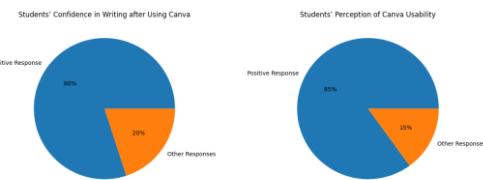


Figure 2. Students' Perceptions of Canva Usability and Writing Confidence

The questionnaire results indicated that most students perceived Canva as easy to use and reported increased confidence in writing English. Students expressed that Canva made writing tasks more enjoyable and less intimidating, as they could focus on ideas and creativity rather than solely on grammatical accuracy. This finding supports Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, which suggests that lower anxiety and higher confidence facilitate language acquisition.

The increased confidence observed in this study also aligns with previous research indicating that digital multimodal tools can create a supportive learning environment that encourages risk-taking and self-expression in writing (Al-Shehri & Al-Qarni, 2021). Therefore, Canva not only supported students' technical writing skills but also contributed positively to their emotional engagement with the writing process.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

This qualitative study explored the integration of Canva as a digital learning tool in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' recount writing skills at the junior high school level. Drawing on evidence from classroom observations, students' writing products, questionnaires, and interviews, the findings demonstrate that Canva plays a meaningful role in supporting both cognitive and

affective dimensions of EFL writing development.

From a cognitive perspective, the use of Canva helped students organize recount texts more systematically by providing visual templates that guided the structure of orientation, sequence of events, and reorientation. Students showed improvement in expressing ideas more coherently and creatively, indicating that multimodal features can function as effective scaffolding in genre-based writing instruction. These findings support genre-based pedagogy, which emphasizes guided support to help learners internalize text structure and purpose.

From an affective perspective, Canva contributed to increased student engagement and confidence in writing English. Many students reported that writing activities became more enjoyable and less intimidating when visual elements were incorporated. This reduction in writing anxiety allowed students to focus more on meaning-making rather than linguistic accuracy alone, supporting affective filter theory in language learning.

Nevertheless, several challenges were identified during the implementation of Canva. Limited internet access and varying levels of digital literacy occasionally disrupted learning activities. Moreover, while Canva supported creativity and idea development, explicit teacher instruction remained necessary to address grammatical accuracy and vocabulary development. These findings indicate that digital tools should function as complementary resources rather than replacements for sound pedagogical practices.

Based on the findings, several suggestions are proposed. First, English teachers are encouraged to integrate Canva within genre-based writing instruction to enhance student engagement and creativity while continuing to provide explicit instruction on language features and text organization. Combining Canva-based activities with collaborative learning

strategies may further strengthen peer interaction and idea sharing.

Second, schools should support the use of digital learning tools by improving technological infrastructure, particularly reliable internet access, and by offering professional development programs to strengthen teachers' digital pedagogical competence. Institutional support is essential to ensure the effective and sustainable integration of technology in language classrooms.

Finally, future research is recommended to explore the use of Canva across different text genres and educational levels. Longitudinal or mixed-method studies may provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of digital multimodal tools on students' writing development and overall language proficiency.

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