

Enhancing Language Learning Experience in ESL Classrooms using Canva Whiteboard Application

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Abstract: The study explores the use of Canva Whiteboard as a digital tool to assist active learning in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. Even though Canva has been used in education for various purposes, there is limited research focusing specifically on its Whiteboard feature. This study aims to understand the students' perceptions in using Canva Whiteboards in terms of interactivity, effectiveness and ease of use. A survey was conducted with 54 diploma students taking an English proficiency course at a Malaysian public university. The findings show that students generally had a very positive view of Canva Whiteboard. They believed it helped them participate more in class, made group work easier and allowed for real-time feedback from both peers and lecturers. It also impacted their motivation to learn and made the lessons feel more effective. Many students found this feature to be fun and easy to use, encouraging them to continue using it in the future. The results suggest that Canva Whiteboard can be a valuable tool in making ESL learning more engaging and student-centered. However, challenges such as access to fully functioning devices, reliable internet and the need for the teachers to be well-versed with technology must be addressed. Overall, using digital tools like Canva Whiteboard not only enhances the learning experience but also helps

students develop important digital skills.

Keywords: active learning, Canva Whiteboard, language learning, online interactive whiteboard, student perception

INTRODUCTION

Modern language instruction requires digital tools as any other form of education is being carried out nowadays. The use of technology makes teaching and learning more convenient as technology itself is made to help make human tasks easier (Amrina et al., 2022). Canva is one of the emerging tools that is used in teaching and learning for its various user-friendly features (Fitria, 2022).

In recent years, quite a number of research can be found on the use of Canva application in education. This includes research on the use of Canva to help with making formal invitations (Mukti, 2021), writing a formal curriculum vitae (CV) (Lestari & Sihombing, 2022), writing a cover letter (Fitria, 2022) and creating a digital flyer (Juwairia et al., 2022). This indicates a huge interest in the use of this application in recent years. Of the many different features that the Canva application has to offer, such as sheets, presentation, photo editor, and others (Fitria & Afdaleni, 2024), one of its features, Canva Whiteboard, has the potential to facilitate active learning in ESL classes. It fosters collaboration, improves visual engagement and allows for learner autonomy. These are all components of an active learning environment.

Active learning and any other student-centered learning methods are not new in English as Second Language (ESL) education. This has well begun since the communicative language teaching approach was introduced in the 1970's (Pusey, 2018). ESL learners are encouraged to focus on using English to communicate as it gives more purpose and meaning, thus creating higher retention. This is the fundamental of active learning where the learners are supposed to immerse themselves in the learning process to make the learning process more effective. Canva Whiteboard seems to have these characteristics thus making it an effective tool in facilitating active learning in ESL classrooms.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In terms of the usage of Canva in ESL or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, studies done include looking into its usage in teaching EFL Business Correspondence Class (Hapsari, 2023), writing skills (Rena Eka et al., 2023), speaking skills (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024), paragraph writing class (Rokhmatin et al., 2024), and project-based writing class (Royani et al., 2024 & Priyatna et al., 2023). Despite having quite a number of research in the area, the research done did not focus on the use of Canva Whiteboard on its own, but rather on other features of Canva. Limited research can be found on the use of Canva Whiteboard as one of the recent online whiteboard applications in the market.

Therefore, this present study intends to; 1) discover the students' perception on the ability of Canva Whiteboard in creating a more interactive classroom experience; 2) investigate student's perception on the overall effectiveness of using Canva Whiteboard in ESL classroom; and 3) study the students' perception on its ease of use and practicality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology in English Language Learning

Aligned with the development of technology, various tools have emerged in assisting people with daily tasks. This development has directly influenced how teaching and learning processes are being carried out in classrooms recently. One of the changes is in the use of digital whiteboards. Technology allows teachers and students to move from the traditional whiteboard to a digital whiteboard which can be accessed online.

According to Remón et al., (2017) and McGrath et al., (2016), the use of digital whiteboards creates an environment where students feel comfortable and more confident to actively participate during the lesson. Student's engagement and participation is very important in language learning to ensure students can understand the lesson better. This is supported by Rena Eka et al. (2023) who stated that the integration of technology in ESL classes makes learning more enjoyable and thus facilitates their English language skills development. This is because, when using a digital whiteboard, the lesson can be conducted synchronously. Students will participate in the activity whilst the instructor will observe and provide immediate feedback to students so that they can directly make the necessary corrections. This close engagement between the instructor and the students allows for an enhanced learning authenticity, making it easier for instructors to understand students' educational needs (Handley, 2023). This is also supported by Azme (2024), stating that the use of digital whiteboards in classrooms has made it easier for instructors to observe and evaluate students' understanding. Adding to that, it was also mentioned that the usage of digital whiteboards in the classroom is easier now as students have their own personal devices, like their handphones, tablets or laptops. Getting them to participate becomes easier and this makes online digital whiteboards an effective tool for students to collaborate, communicate and engage with their friends and instructor (Campbell et al., 2019).

Canva Whiteboard

In recent years, among other platforms that provide digital whiteboard applications, Canva has emerged as one of the most popular user-friendly applications (Priyatna et al., 2023). It uses a very simple interface that can be explored easily by the users.

Canva is an online application which is available in both web browser and mobile application. This makes Canva a very practical application to be used in class especially among university students as they would have their smartphones with them and this can save a lot of time during the lesson (Kurniawan, 2023). The application features a drag-and-drop design, which enhances ease of use for both everyday users and professional designers. With a wide array of tools such as fonts, graphics, vectors, and templates, Canva serves as a flexible platform for producing different kinds of visual materials (Royani et al., 2024).

These features of Canva make its whiteboard a very practical online digital whiteboard to be used in ESL classrooms. The variety of features and templates that help present and simplify information in an engaging manner make it easier for students to grasp English concepts (Monoarfa & Haling, 2021). Instructors can use the templates and graphics in Canva to design engaging and imaginative visual content (Christiana & Anwar, 2021). This will capture students' attention and encourage their interest in learning because the features are not dull or repetitive (Alamia et al., 2024). The unique and organized readily available templates that Canva has to offer make it easier for instructors to prepare their materials for the lesson on Canva Whiteboard. Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) emphasized that the flexibility of this

application allows both educators and learners to tailor it to fit their specific instructional and learning needs. Tailoring it to match the students' needs is crucial to ensure that the students can benefit as much as they can from the lesson and the task that they are assigned with.

Since it is an online whiteboard, students will be directly involved in developing and contributing to the discussion or the task given on the whiteboard. Instructors can directly observe students' participation and understanding by analyzing their work in real time. By utilizing a hands-on digital tool, the use of Canva Whiteboard can boost students' motivation (Andriyanto et al., 2022). Hands-on participation helps students to feel more engaged in the learning process and this type of involvement supports the strategies in the active learning approach.

Canva Whiteboard and Active Learning

Bonwell & Eison (1991) defined active learning as an instructional approach that actively engages students in the learning process, encouraging them to participate in meaningful learning activities and think critically about what they are doing. According to them, some of the major characteristics of active learning strategies include high students' involvement and engagement, greater emphasis on students' skill development, attitude and motivation as well as availability of immediate feedback.

This is also supported by Pusey (2018) where he listed out ten strategies to encourage active learning. He claimed educators should; 1) hold students accountable; 2) incorporate stimulating content; 3) create personal connections; 4) support academic socialization; 5) offer choices; 6) stimulate critical thinking; 7) build a sense of classroom community; 8) be mindful of teacher talk time; 9) engage in reflection, collection and response to feedback; and 10) make the learning experience enjoyable (Pusey, 2018). These efforts can be achieved through the usage of Canva Whiteboard. This is because, as explained in the previous section, this application requires both students and instructors to participate in a real time discussion and collaboration to complete the given task. The collaboration among students will create a supportive classroom environment where everybody will feel accountable and responsible to help one another. Collaborative tasks and peer learning enhance student engagement while fostering a sense of belonging and mutual goals. Additionally, incorporating diverse instructional methods like lectures, multimedia, teamwork, and project-based activities helps in keeping lessons dynamic and maintains student interest (Sofi & Sahal, 2024). By using Canva Whiteboard, instead of simply presenting information, educators now can foster an environment that encourages students to actively build their own understanding. The emphasis is on helping learners investigate, inquire, and apply what they learn, rather than absorbing content passively (Sofi & Sahal, 2024).

While students work on the task, instructors can observe, evaluate and provide feedback accordingly. They can also give encouraging comments to students and use positive emojis to acknowledge their work. Recognizing students' efforts and growth through praise, incentives, and meaningful feedback according to Sofi & Sahal (2024) can boost their motivation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research method where a survey was used to collect the data. The face and content validity were obtained by gathering expert opinion and readings from another research. Then, amendments were made accordingly. In order to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha test was conducted. The questionnaire has an internal consistency reliability of 0.980 which is good as according to

Frankael, Wallen and Hyun (2012), when looking into reliability, it should be at least .70 and preferably higher to be considered as reliable.

This study involved diploma students, who took an English proficiency course in a public university. Convenient sampling method was used due to the limited access to the students. The survey was distributed only at one point in time because the research was not interested in looking into changes in their responses over time. Therefore, the cross-sectional survey type was used (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). After the survey was distributed and collected, 54 respondents participated in the study. The collected data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In providing answers to all the research questions, this research made use of descriptive statistics to discuss the findings from the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Questionnaire

Table 1: Perceived Interactivity

Item No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I believe that Canva Whiteboard helps me to be more participative in English classes.	4.407	0.858
2	I believe that Canva Whiteboard makes English classes more inclusive (I don't feel left out in class).	4.389	0.899
3	The use of Canva Whiteboard gives me more control over my learning (I feel like I have more freedom in learning).	4.315	0.820
4	The use of Canva Whiteboard makes it easier to participate in group work.	4.519	0.795
5	The use of Canva Whiteboard makes it easier to get feedback from friends and the lecturer.	4.556	0.769

Mean score indicator: 1.00 – 2.49 (Low), 2.50 – 3.49 (Moderate), 3.50 – 5.00 (High)

Based on the findings presented in Table 1, students generally perceived Canva Whiteboard as a tool that promotes interactivity. Item No 5 “The use of Canva Whiteboard makes it easier to get feedback from friends and the lecturer.” reported the highest mean (mean=4.555, SD=0.998). Getting immediate feedback from the lecturer is an important strategy in active learning as stated by Bonwell & Eison (1991). Using Canva Whiteboard, feedback can be given to students through comments, and it can be done immediately as the instructor can view the work while the students are working on it. This is followed by Item No 4 “The use of Canva Whiteboard makes it easier to participate in group work.” (mean=4.519, SD=0.795) and Item No 1 “I believe that Canva Whiteboard helps me to be more participative in English classes.” (mean=4.407, SD=0.858). This indicated that students strongly supported the notion that Canva Whiteboard makes it easier to participate in group work and throughout the lesson in general. This inclusivity makes Canva Whiteboard a suitable tool in promoting active learning as according to Sofi & Sahal, (2024), group activities do not only make the learners feel more engaged, but it also retains the students’ interest for a much longer time. Engaged learners are more likely to remember the lessons better.

Table 2: Perceived Effectiveness

Item No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
6	I believe that Canva Whiteboard helps me to understand English classes better.	4.426	0.838
7	I believe that Canva Whiteboard makes me feel more motivated to learn English.	4.315	0.843
8	I believe that Canva Whiteboard helps me to be more focused in English classes.	4.296	0.964
9	I believe that Canva Whiteboard helps me feel like I have learned something at the end of every lesson.	4.444	0.862
10	In general, I believe that the use of Canva Whiteboard enhances the effectiveness of English classes.	4.444	0.793
<i>Mean score indicator: 1.00 – 2.49 (Low), 2.50 – 3.49 (Moderate), 3.50 – 5.00 (High)</i>			

In terms of the effectiveness of Canva Whiteboard in enhancing learner's understanding and motivation, as presented in Table 2, two items scored the same mean which are Item 9 "I believe that Canva Whiteboard helps me feel like I have learned something at the end of every lesson." (mean=4.444, SD=0.862) and Item 10 "In general, I believe that the use of Canva Whiteboard enhances the effectiveness of English classes." (mean=4.444, SD=0.793). Item 9 indicated that the use of Canva Whiteboard in ESL classes helped students to learn better. As mentioned earlier, the use of online whiteboard features such as Canva Whiteboard provides students with the availability of instant feedback and active communication among peers as well as with the instructors (Handley, 2023). This close interaction among class members allows the instructor to address students' needs and this increases the chance of students to learn better. Rena Eka et al. (2023) also mentioned that the integration of technology in ESL classes provides students with enjoyable experience, and this facilitates the learning process. Item 7 "I believe that Canva Whiteboard makes me feel more motivated to learn English." (mean=4.315, SD=0.843) also reported a high mean score. The practical digital application when using Canva allows students to feel more motivated in the learning process (Andriyanto et al., 2022). While engaging with the Canva Whiteboard interface, students would most likely feel more interested as the features are not boring (Alamia et al., 2024). This helps to make students more motivated and thus make the ESL lessons more effective.

Table 3: Perceived Ease of Use

Item No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
11	Canva Whiteboard is easy to use.	4.444	0.817
12	I generally favour the use of Canva Whiteboard.	4.296	0.882
13	Learning using Canva Whiteboard is fun.	4.574	0.815
14	I would be willing to use Canva Whiteboard again if given the chance.	4.482	0.818
15	I would suggest the use of Canva Whiteboard in class to others.	4.426	0.860
<i>Mean score indicator: 1.00 – 2.49 (Low), 2.50 – 3.49 (Moderate), 3.50 – 5.00 (High)</i>			

For the perceived ease of use, the item with the highest mean score is Item 13 "Learning using Canva Whiteboard is fun." (mean=4.574, SD=0.815) followed by Item 14 "I would be willing to use Canva Whiteboard again if given the chance." (mean=4.482, SD=0.818). Students generally find Canva to be very interesting and fun to use because of its variety of fonts, graphics, and templates coupled with its drag and drop function which makes it very appealing to students (Royani et al., 2024). They can freely add graphics and change the fonts on Canva Whiteboard as it is an interactive online digital whiteboard. Rokhmatin et al., (2024) also reported the same finding where the students also suggested the use of Canva for future use as

well. Other than that, Item 11 “Canva Whiteboard is easy to use.” (mean=4.444, SD=0.817) also reported one of the highest mean scores. Priyatna et al., (2023) in their study on the use of Canva for teaching ESL writing also reported the same finding where the students found Canva easy to use. Canva’s simple interface allows beginners to use it easily without much guidance (Rokhmatin et al., 2024). Students can learn how to use the features in the Canva Whiteboard interface easily and this would contribute to them wanting to continuously use the application.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings indicate a very positive perception among the students towards the use of Canva Whiteboard in enhancing the ESL learning experience. However, aspects like access to a fully functioning device and a strong internet connection should not be ignored. Teacher training should also be a priority as not all teachers are tech-savvy, and it could affect the effectiveness of the application overall. Ani et al., (2022) emphasized that the swift development of technology makes it crucial for teachers to excel in using technology and apply its usage in ESL classrooms. Another aspect to be considered is managing group dynamics in collaborative settings like Canva Whiteboard because some members might not be as participative as the rest and it could be a barrier in maximizing its interactivity feature. Thus, future research might look at these aspects.

All in all, integrating technology and digital tools in ESL classes will not only help students to acquire skills for academic success, but it can also help them to improve their digital competency which will assist them in their future careers (Sofi & Sahal, 2024).

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