

The Use of iPad in Enhancing Creative Writing: An Innovative Approach for Young ESL Learners

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Abstract

Digital technology is essential to today's education development. Research has shown that the use of digital technology such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) positively impacts language learning. This study investigates the language learners' perception of using iPad to enhance creative writing and the potential of using iPad to improve creative writing. An online survey adapted from Technology Acceptance Model was distributed to 50 primary school learners using iPad for developing creative writing across Malaysia. The analysis of the responses demonstrated that language learners have a positive perception towards using iPad to enhance creative writing. On this basis, it is recommended that language teachers and learners use iPad or any similar devices to enhance language learning.

Keywords

Creative Writing, iPad, Writing Skill, Creative Writing, Active Learning, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), English Language, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)

1. Introduction

Writing is an essential language skill. However, it can be a problem for some second or foreign language learners to acquire writing skills. Researchers, educators and learners' resort to digital technology as another solution choice to enhance and improve language teaching and learning. With digital technology becoming an essential tool in today's human life, it also influences how 21st-century

teachers teach and how learners learn. The emergence of new gadgets, apps, and software has provided educators and learners with the essential tool to boost teaching and learning to be more effective and meaningful. The reason learners rely and depend heavily on this modern innovation is because it makes life very easy and convenient (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). Digital technology somehow has become the new approach and direction in the education field.

Interest in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) began in the 1960s in America to aid or support second or foreign language acquisition. CALL development has initiated Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) development in the 1980s. The early version of MALL uses the telephone for teaching and learning purposes. The emergence of mobile phones followed by other devices such as tablets and PDAs has taken MALL to another level. Nowadays, CALL and MALL are supported by websites, software and applications, developed to boost second or foreign language acquisition. Modern education emphasises student-centred learning where learner autonomy is fostered for the students. Thus, one way to encourage and enhance learner autonomy is by providing the learners with the tools they need to learn, digital technology.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) have become vital to enhance the performance of ESL and EFL learners as aids or support the learners learning. It has made learning easier, more enjoyable, more comfortable, more resources, less pressure and supports the diverse level of learners. Studies related to CALL and MALL provide both educators and learners with promising potential. iPad or any other devices, software or apps related to CALL and MALL can improve the ability of a child to build words phonetically in story writing (Kuznetsova et al., 2017). Teachers in Malaysia use mobile learning to teach other language skills but not writing (Zaki & Yunus, 2014).

iPad is one of the most devices frequently used in MALL. Most of the research related to the iPad is not focused on writing skills but focuses more on children's motor skills on handwriting development. Besides, there is so little study on iPad or related devices to enhance creative writing in Malaysia. Thus, there is an urgent need to conduct more studies.

This study aims to investigate the use of iPad to enhance creative writing among ESL learner in Malaysia. The findings from this study will provide important information to the researchers and ESL teachers on how iPad can improve creative writing among ESL learners. It will give the researchers and teachers a better understanding of how to incorporate using technology to enhance creative writing in the lesson and to understand the potential of digital technology to enhance learning from the perspective of ESL and EFL teachers. Besides, it will also provide ESL learners with some understanding of how they can enhance and improve their language learning more effectively through digital technology. The objectives of this study are:

- To investigate the perception of language learners on the use of iPad to enhance creative writing.

- To investigate the perception of language learners on the potential of iPad to enhance creative writing in the future.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Technology in Education

Technology plays an essential part in the educational field. Young people today confront a new phenomenon where digital interaction and communication is a part of their lives. Teachers have to be creative in cultivating digital media literacy among young people, either in the physical or virtual language classroom. Approaches to English language teaching and learning should be changed and improved to parallel the keep changing technology. A creative and innovative learning environment should be incorporated into language learning with technology implementation as one of the fundamental shifts in the educational goals in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2023, integration of technologies in the classroom is very important. The education sector also has evolved to Educational Revolution 4.0, where teaching and learning are highly technologically enhanced due to the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The former Higher Education Minister has initiated the motion of Educational Revolution 4.0 in the Malaysian education system in 2018. This Educational Revolution 4.0 has the ability to empower students with self-learning, critical thinking, digital competency, and problem-solving skills. To stay aligned with the evolving Industrial Revolution 4.0, the integration of Educational Revolution 4.0 in the education system is crucial to remain relevant (Halili, 2019).

The teachers in the 21st century have to realise that nowadays, students are more technology-oriented; thus, the teacher should take advantage of it to teach the students with the technology they use. Students' interest in a considerable number of smartphones, tablets, iPads and notebooks are a warning to the teachers of the necessity to use similar digital-based tools to attract students into an academic discussion. With the increasing use of technology among young learners, Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) has been introduced as a learning platform. The development of mobile devices as learning tools has been rapidly increasing (Hashim et al., 2017). To get to the 21st-century, students need learning no longer just traditional academic learning. MALL is a wide-spreading approach and is considered one of the 21st-century skills. To ensure the students' participation and engagement in the learning process, one of the ways is by using advanced technology. The use of technology can also help the students understand the learning contents effectively compared to the traditional learning method. The use of mobile phones, tablets or iPads can motivate the students to learn inside or outside the classroom (Zulfakar & Zabidi, 2020). The benefit of accessing learning materials at any place makes them more interested and motivated to learn the English language. A study conducted among EFL university students reported that multimedia-assisted language learning helped the participants develop their English communicative competency (Jeong,

2018).

The failure to bridge the gap between the current millennial generation and traditional teaching methods will cause difficulty among the teachers to deliver the lessons, and students will face mundane learning experiences. Language competency and skills can only be realised through blended learning (Kristanto et al., 2017). Thus, this learning model requires the optimisation of technology with a combination of traditional learning methods to obtain creative, innovative, and competitive graduates to survive the challenges in industrial revolution 4.0. New technologies in education are essential to make 21st-century learning possible. They support the delivery of educational content, for instance, in making them interactive and immersive. To help students improve all the skills they need to master English language learning, learners should be given a chance to choose their learning preferences that suit their learning styles (Yunus, 2017). Since students live in the digital era that keeps evolving from day to day, teachers need to keep abreast of the students to ensure the students' success to face future challenges.

2.2. iPad as a Learning Tool

Therefore, the learning process can become more affordable and faster as students can learn in mobility through a blended and virtual learning approach (Hussin, 2018). In addition to iPad support, students are also fully empowered to understand and independently improve the learning process based on their needs and achievements. There are lots of initiatives provided by the government to ensure that the students will get the knowledge regardless of where they are. The initiative was led by the ministry of communication and digital technologies through the minister, where the announcement was made that the departments of communications and digital technologies and primary education have joined forces to ensure virtual learning is a reality during the nationwide lockdown (Johannesburg, 2020). Schools and classrooms are the main places for schooling and teaching in the conventional style of school education. In the classroom, teachers pass on information to students, and students learn what teachers have learned, and this is a traditional type of education.

There are proof and evidence of iPad usefulness in different areas of the educational process, such as the iPad's multifunctional functionality, which has broad potential to be used in education. Furthermore, the iPad improves learning experiences through a variety of positive features. In addition, using an iPad as an educational tool helps improve and promote academic skills (van der Meer et al., 2015). There is additional proof of the utility of the iPad in education. For example, students used the Pocket Pond app to enhance and develop sensory perception by pressing the phone, and students used Draw with Stars as a precursor to learning (Nguyen et al., 2015).

2.3. Technology-Assisted Digital Writing

Digital writing is a widely used method in educational sectors around the world.

The implementation of digital writing is helpful for both academic and social purposes. Learners could build motivation and engagement to the English language in classroom activities and social environments outside of the classroom. The feature that makes digital writing different from non-digital writing is mainly because of the online space they are situated in (Amâncio, 2017). Students' involvement in setting up the plot of a story, storyboards and script preparation makes it an authentic learning environment that could engage and motivate students (Chan et al., 2017). A researcher provides a finding that indicates digital writing increases their motivation and supports speaking skills in a foreign language among the participants (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019). With a personalised learning experience, the learners are more engaged and work at their own pace. The learners' participation and the interactive learning environment in creating a story were very effective and helpful in engaging participants to communicate orally.

On another note, using digital writing as a platform, this non-threatening way promotes the pupils to write in English because they can edit their written text (Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018). The creation of digital writing allows children to collaborate and share their stories. This can build and enhance students' collaboration skills. With digital writing, pupils can practise their English language in integrated and creative ways. They need to use different resources, such as vocabulary, grammar, and non-linguistic resources, to create meaning and think creatively of how these resources hang together to communicate the intended message or meaning. Since digital writing takes the form of a video, students can playback this video as a source of reflection for learning. They have the opportunity to review and learn from this video. Repeated writing performance allows pupils to be more alert when they review their write up, and later, they could reflect on their writing performance (Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018). Alternatively, students can improve their English language skills by engaging in digital writing outside the classroom. Besides being involved in learning activities, digital writing also can enhance children's English vocabulary acquisition (Tridinanti, 2017). This finding supported their research when the participants improved self-confidence, fluency, sentence production, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Febriyanti & Susanto, 2017).

In addition to improving performance in writing, speaking and reading, digital writing has a significant impact on second language learning. This may be because digital writing enhanced fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehensibility skills. The students' motivation and interest in writing and reading can be improved with storytelling, eventually developing their English (Arifiah & Binawan, 2018). It concluded that digital writing could improve students' writing skills in five aspects: vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, pronunciation, and grammar. In addition, the students' self-confidence to write and share their ideas in front of the class improved.

Moreover, the result showed that digital writing could effectively improve the students' motivation in learning English since it was presented in a fascinating

form (Arifiah & Binawan, 2018). Previously, a study has shown similar results. In that research, the digital writing application motivated the participants to learn the English language because of its exciting and fun features (Amelia & Abidin, 2018). Motivation is one of the main factors determining the effectiveness of the teaching and students' achievement in learning. A study conducted on senior high school students proves that digital writing suites the digital generation, preparing them to become more critical, creative, and confident (Syafryadin et al., 2019). Applying digital writing as a learning method helps the students develop their writing and reading skills competency (Mohamed Salama Eissa, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

In this study, the researchers adopted quantitative survey research. Quantitative research is a structured and systematic investigation of collecting data. It involves using computational, numerical and precise techniques to extract the outcomes. A quantitative survey allows the researchers to gather statistical data from the targeted group using questionnaires to depict the attitudes of a larger population (Creswell, 2012). The results could be generalised with the population precisely and adequately. Therefore, it is expected that the findings will illustrate the concrete state of the ESL learner's perception of using iPad to enhance creative writing.

3.2. Research Participants

In selecting samples, the purposive sampling method was used in this research. Purposive sampling aims to produce samples representing the entire selected population (Battaglia, 2008). It is the most fairly straightforward method for choosing a sample among people for a wide range of purposes. Moreover, the purposive sampling method is appropriate as it allows the researchers to carefully determine those participants who can fit to be the compelling respondent. The population for this study consists of twenty-one respondents studying in primary schools across Malaysia. The validation of selecting the samples was because the students use iPad in their daily routine. Hence, they are familiar with the iPad's features, which lighten the burden as the researchers are not required to introduce the essential elements of the iPad.

50 students were involved in this study through purposive sampling. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as complete lockdown and Movement Control Order (MCO), some of the students from suburban and rural areas faced weak internet connections, which restricted them from responding to the questionnaire. Therefore, only 21 students responded to the survey.

3.3. Research Instrument

A questionnaire comprising statements about technology acceptance to influ-

ence one's perception and aim to use new technologies was distributed. The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate users' acceptance of technologies. There are five factors in this model: (perceived ease of use), (perceived usefulness), (behavioural intention), (attitudes) and (actual usage). According to Venkatesh et al., (2003) TAM was initiated to be both reliable and provide valid analysis in predicting an individual's acceptance of technology. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1986) survey questionnaire was adopted, and the researchers have tailored some of the items to the needs of the research study.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections; the first part requires respondents' state demographics. The second part consists of six items requiring respondents' perceptions and experiences of incorporating iPad in creative writing. For the questionnaire, the range of nominal scale varies based on the item. Item 1 was designed purposely from 1 = Yes and 2 = No. From Item 2 to Item 5, the nominal scale was designed purposely with 1 = Yes, 2 = No and 3 = I really do not know or don't know. However, the last Item, Item 6, uses the ordinal Likert scale made up of 7 points which were designed purposely from 1 = Easy, 2 = Very Easy, 3 = Somewhat easy, 4-Difficult, 5 = Very difficult, 6 = Somewhat difficult and 7-I don't know.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted using quantitative investigation by distributing survey questionnaires through Google Form. The questionnaire was disseminated to all the participants on the first week of the study by sharing the link of the online survey questionnaire through WhatsApp, an instant messaging application. The data was then immediately collected in the fourth week of the research. This method was done to reach the participants across Malaysia as well as it is easier to gather the data from the respondents.

3.5. Data Analysis

A descriptive statistics data analysis was conducted to determine the students' perceptions in the form of frequency mean, standard deviation and percentage for demographic of state. The data was then calculated and presented in the form of a table. The researchers obtained the database using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. SPSS is so prevalent because it provides quick analysis for repetitive data and efficiently validates the result. Lastly, the data summarises the participants' responses that describe the range to which iPad can potentially enhance creative writing.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented based on research objectives as follows. The first part of the findings presents the use of iPad to enhance creative writing. The second part shows the potential of iPad to enhance creative writing in future. Based on these findings, most respondents believe that iPad can become a potential way

for learners to improve creative writing in the future.

Based on the findings and analysis, it could be summarised that the participants started to love using iPad because they could show their creativity and abilities in writing stories. Based on the results, the students thought that iPad could be a possible way to enhance their creative writing. During this pandemic of COVID-19, the students have to find many alternative ways to learn English and any other subject. In this era, accessibility is everything, whereby when the students have access to the devices and internet, they can always learn (Hashim et al., 2018). This indicated that the researcher's initial assumption of the use of iPad to enhance the writing skills among the students was correct. The results have reacted successfully to the research objectives. Technology is undoubtedly a vital tool for helping students write (Yunus, 2017). In addition, the way people gain new information these days is very much related to what they find on any device with the presence of the internet (Maslawati et al., 2018).

Most of the students in the research agreed that they would continue using iPad in learning English in the future. The students keep using the iPad as one of the learning tools because of its effectiveness and convenience in helping students who had problems in learning improve their writing skills (Wang et al., 2015). Some of the applications used in enhancing writing skills using iPads were Story Planner, iA Writer and many more. The research findings support these by proving that the students were able to use the applications in the iPad to help them enhance their creative writing. At the early stage of the using iPad, teachers were not sure whether the learners could cope with this kind and style of learning.

This is very different from what had been observed by the teachers when they were using the traditional method in the classroom, which is "chalk and talks" and the new method, which is digital learning. Hence, to overcome some issues of teaching English in the classroom, teachers can improvise their teaching methodology by including digital devices to gain students' attention, thus converting the lesson to be more meaningful and fun. As a teacher imparting the knowledge to the students, they should use this kind of opportunity to create more engaging, successful and enjoyable English lessons so that English is no longer regarded as a killer subject but can be considered the best subject instead.

When the teachers integrate technology in teaching, they can reach some goals of education. For instance, teachers can train students' Information of Communication Technology (ICT), inspire students' learning motivation and interest improve students' speaking skills and many more (Wang et al., 2015). These goals proved that using iPad as a teaching tool is not only for enhancing creative writing but also can integrate any skill depends on the teachers' creativity. Apart from that, the use of iPad in enhancing the creative writing skills among the students may also be used to teach other aspects of the language skills like reading, listening or speaking.

The pupil's mental attitude that English is challenging and tedious should be positive. When they know the correct way to deal with it, they will find that learning the language is exciting and engaging. It is also suggested that iPad use

in teaching would enable them to hit a higher target, especially among primary and secondary school students because students love technology so much. At the same time, it can also increase their motivation in learning. Therefore, by using the iPad as a tool during the teaching and learning processes, the students will learn English more enjoyably and interactively with the benefit of technology.

4.1. Demographic Information

Based on **Table 1**, majority of the respondents are from Selangor, 6 person (28.6%), followed by Terengganu, 4 person (19.0%), Johor and Perak both 2 person (9.5%) and finally Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Penang, Sarawak and Putrajaya with each consisting of 1 person (4.8%).

4.2. The Use of iPad to Enhance Creative Writing

Based on **Table 2**, it appears that the majority of the participants have used any writing app or writing software for their English class before (61.9%, $n = 13$). 38.1% ($n = 8$) have never used any writing app or writing software for their English class before.

Based on **Table 3**, it appears that the majority of the participants think that using word app such as Pages for their creative writing is beneficial (81%, $n = 17$). 9.5% ($n = 2$) believe that using word apps such as Pages for your creative writing is not helpful, while another 9.5% ($n = 2$) are not sure if using word apps such as Pages for their creative writing is beneficial.

Based on **Table 4**, it appears that the majority of the participants, 95.2% ($n = 20$), think that using the iPad for their creative writing is engaging. The remaining participant, 4.8% ($n = 1$), thinks it is not helpful.

Table 1. State of participants.

		State of participants			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Johor	2	9.5	9.5	9.5
	Kedah	1	4.8	4.8	14.3
	Kelantan	1	4.8	4.8	19.0
	Negeri Sembilan	1	4.8	4.8	23.8
	Pahang	1	4.8	4.8	28.6
	Penang	1	4.8	4.8	33.3
	Perak	2	9.5	9.5	42.9
	Sarawak	1	4.8	4.8	47.6
	Selangor	6	28.6	28.6	76.2
	Terengganu	4	19.0	19.0	95.2
	Putrajaya	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Frequency and percentage for Item 1.

Have you ever used any writing app or writing software for your English class before?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	13	61.9	61.9	61.9
	NO	8	38.1	38.1	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Frequency and percentage for Item 2.

Do you think using word apps such as Pages for your creative writing is useful?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	17	81.0	81.0	81.0
	NO	2	9.5	9.5	90.5
	I REALLY DON'T KNOW	2	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Frequency and percentage for Item 3.

Do you think using an iPad for your creative writing is interesting?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	20	95.2	95.2	95.2
	NO	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Mean for Item 4.

Statistics		
How can you describe the process of producing your creative writing on iPad?		
N	Valid	21
	Missing	0
Mean		3.3333
Std. Deviation		2.00832
Percentiles	100	7.0000

Table 5 implies that most respondents describe that producing their creative writing is somewhat easy because the mean score is $\mu = 3.3333$ with a standard deviation of 2.008. Based on these findings, most respondents are optimistic about using the iPad to enhance creative writing.

4.3. The Potential of iPad to Enhance Creative Writing in the Future

Based on **Table 6**, it appears that the majority of the participants, 71.4% ($n = 15$),

Table 6. Frequency and percentage for Item 5.

Will you continue producing creative writing using the iPad in the future?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	YES	15	71.4	71.4	71.4
Valid	I DON'T KNOW	6	28.6	28.6	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. Frequency and percentage for Item 6.

Can you see yourself using an iPad in the future to learn English?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	YES	17	81.0	81.0	81.0
Valid	NO	2	9.5	9.5	90.5
	I DON'T KNOW	2	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

think that they will continue producing creative writing using iPad in the future. The remaining participants, 28.6% ($n = 6$), are not sure if they will continue creating creative writing using iPad in the future.

Based on **Table 7**, it appears that most of the participants, 81% ($n = 17$), think that they will be using an iPad to learn English, while 9.5% ($n = 2$) do not feel that they will be using it iPad in the future to learn English. The remaining 9.5% ($n = 2$) are not sure if they will be using iPad in the future to learn English.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the innovation of using the iPad to enhance the creative writing skills among the students has shown that the pupils' writing skills and ability have increased. It also helped the pupils to show their creativity and knowledge in learning English without negative judgments by others, especially from their peers. As a result, teachers must recognise this trend and include more ICT into English language teaching and learning in the future, not only to suit the demands of students, but also to create a stimulating learning environment. Students gave good comments about learning using iPad based on all ten categories in the questionnaire.

There were only 21 responders in the research, so the credibility of the results is questionable. If more students can participate in this research, the paper's reliability and validity can be improved. It is also suggested that the researchers can include an interview as one of the research methods to enhance the research's completeness in the future. On the other hand, it is hoped that this classroom activity will be implemented in the schools and outside of the classrooms whether the students are at home or any other place so that the pupils will utilise the iPad or any tool in beneficial ways.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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