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A Systematic Review on the Tools Used in Teaching Writing Skills in ESL Classrooms

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Abstract

Mastering writing skills is one of the most strenuous tasks for second language students. The students need to acquire and learn all four English language skills, which include writing, throughout their secondary education as English will also be utilised in tertiary education. Due to this pressure, the students grapple to master the language. However, due to some interventions using writing tools, students can master one of the major language skills. Thus, this paper presents an analysis of a systematic review based on the past studies on writing tools implemented in ESL classrooms. The studies reviewed are from the year 2018 until 2021, with a total number of 16 articles. This systematic review attempts to identify the tools used in teaching writing skills. There are a myriad of tools used to enhance students' writing skills. Both ICT and non-ICT writing tools are utilised based on the articles selected. This review presents the effectiveness of utilising the writing tools in enhancing writing skills among ESL learners. The results reveal that these tools significantly affected students' writing skills and progress in ESL classrooms. Lastly, this systematic review also includes the disadvantages of using writing tools in writing lessons.

Keywords: Writing Skills, Writing Tools, Intervention, ESL Classrooms

Introduction

Today, the English language is acknowledged as a global language due to its common qualities in some aspects (Rao, 2019). It is deemed as a significant language to acquire, particularly in developing countries that position the language as a second language. This situation impacted the usage of the language in various fields, especially education. Malaysia is no exception, where English is taught as a second language in secondary and tertiary education institutions (Yunus et al., 2019).

In order to enhance students' level of proficiency, skills such as listening, speaking and reading are not the only skills to be mastered. To be a proficient second language user, students need to be able attain all four major language skills as a whole. Acquiring and mastering writing skills are unequivocally an arduous task for both parties in the ESL classrooms, the teachers, and students. Writing has been proven as the most difficult skill to tackle because students need to provide themselves with comprehensible input in order to produce a good written piece (Shin, 2014). Moreover, due to its nonlinear process, writing is

deemed as the most difficult language skill to acquire (Tze Pheng et al., 2021). Both teachers and students encounter challenges to teach and learn writing in ESL classrooms. Students' writing proficiency were influenced by their inability to provide reasons, underpin evidence, and project or accept ideas (Kakandee & Kaur, 2015). On the other hand, the difficulty in writing steps in directed paragraph writing influenced both first and second language students' poor writing performance (Majid & Stapa, 2017). Furthermore, the students received minimal instructions from their teachers during the writing lessons (Zainuddin & Rafik-Galea, 2016).

Previously, teaching and learning in the classroom only revolved around the 'chalk and board' method which makes learning writing skills for the students dull and boring. Hence, making acquiring the skill impossible. However, due to the emergence of technology along with the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the education system shifted to emphasize 21st century learning in the classroom. Nowadays, teaching English is accompanied with myriads of digitalised technologies and expanded multimodality acting as a platform to teach (Jensen, 2019).

In order to enhance writing skills, the appropriate tools are crucial, with or without the use of ICT. Both types of tools are equally significant if the tools are operated in a correct manner. The ultimate goal of these writing tools is for the improvement of writing skills among the ESL students.

Therefore, three questions are developed to achieve the objectives of this systematic literature review. The research questions are as followed

1. Which is the most utilised type of writing tools to improve students' writing skills in ESL classrooms?
2. To what extent is the effectiveness of these writing tools in enhancing writing skills in ESL classrooms?
3. What are the disadvantages of incorporating writing tools in ESL classrooms?

The research questions are formed based on the objectives which are to be achieved by the reviewer. The reviewer intends to present the information on the most utilised writing tools to improve students' writing skills, the effectiveness of utilising writing tools and the disadvantages of using writing tools in the ESL writing lessons. In the discussion, the reviewer will demonstrate the results and findings based on the selected articles which enable the reviewer to achieve these objectives.

Literature Review

Writing in an ESL Context

Alongside other major language skills, writing is a crucial skill to master in order to ensure an ongoing learning process. Writing system has been around for years and is used as a form of communication. Writing is beneficial to communicate messages, thoughts, and ideas in a comprehensible language. It is noted that communication is conveyed through writing more frequently than other forms of media (Durga & Rao, 2018). A good form of writing can be an effective tool to convey the message from one person to another. Productive and receptive skills are involved in language learning. Productive skills, or also known as active skills, require students to produce the targeted language through speaking and writing. Writing skills is compulsory in a communication of message from one individual to another, hence, it explains the categorisation of writing as productive skills.

However, communicating the thoughts and ideas can be misunderstood due to various reasons. Organising thoughts, redacting, and eliminating information during writing

can be strenuous (Pek et al., 2019). It is a difficult task for the teachers and students due to certain rules and regulations in writing to be adhered to, such as grammar and spelling. Students need adequate time to develop their writing skills. Time constraints can be one of the barriers that lead to students' inability to produce well-written pieces. Therefore, the teachers need to take these matters into consideration in order to help students in the production of high-quality pieces.

Challenges in Learning Writing

Numerous reasons hinder the production of good pieces of writing. Malaysian students were limited in terms of competency in writing (Chitravelu, 2005). The narrow range of vocabulary is one of the reasons. This statement is supported by (Misbah et al., 2017). An up to par vocabulary repository is useful in writing to convey messages properly. Moreover, poor grammar mastery also contributes to inability to generate good writing pieces. As mentioned by Moses and Mohamad (2019), grammar is a structure that delivers the author's exhaustive meaning to the reader. Spelling is also one of the vital skill sets in writing. The habit of spelling based on pronunciation among the students may lead to spelling errors (Afrin, 2016). Furthermore, readiness to complete writing tasks has also become a problem in writing. Magombo (2015) believed that readiness to learn to write can be developed through motivation and grasping of students' attention. Another contributing factor of challenges in learning to write is the minimal exposure to books and reading materials. Exposure to diverse reading materials may aid in acknowledging the language awareness elaborated (Halim & Hashim, 2019). Lastly, lack of motivation impedes the learning process of writing. Moses and Mohamad (2019) explained that demotivated students may not be interested in pursuing learning to write.

Both teachers and researchers have presented and employed a myriad of strategies and writing tools to facilitate students' learning writing process. However, writing skills proceed to be the most difficult task to master based on the previous studies done throughout the year.

Writing Tools

Various tools have been introduced and used in writing lessons throughout the years. The time spent on teachers' talking formerly was slowly substituted with practices that foster the use of multimedia technologies (Mumtaz, 2000). This statement shows that the traditional methods are gradually adjusted to the progressing information and communication technology (ICT) era. Both types of tools possess plus and minus points.

To integrate ICT writing tools, some are keen in utilising Web 2.0 platforms in the ESL classrooms. Alexander and Levine (2018) as cited in (Gámez & Cuellar, 2019), blogs, Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms have become an important key to reconstruct teaching and learning processes. Other studies also incorporated other ICT tools such as *Plotagon*, *Storybird* and *GoAnimate* in writing to enhance students' writing skills. For instance, Guzmán and Moreno¹⁹ asserted that this type of ICT tools elevated motivation among the students and supported the enhancement of other language skills, namely listening and reading. Internet search engines such as Google, Safari and more, provide information search for educational purposes to the students.

Learning process without utilising ICT can be dull for the students. However, in a study by Fuentes & Núñez (2021), the result demonstrated that the usage of paper-based charts effectively facilitated the students' writing and fostered motivation to complete the writing

task. Concept map tools in writing also benefit the students. Visual organisers, such as OREO graphic organiser, is recommended due to the ability of scaffolding method through graphic organisers may aid students to outline ideas regarding the topic and ease the process to develop ideas (Winty, 2019). Chaikovska (2018) also believed that learning through comics or comic strips is beneficial as a language learning tool. The usage of ICT writing tools is not compulsory to improve writing skills, but alternatives are given to both teachers and students for selection of the best writing tool that can ensure the learning success and objectives' achievement.

Both types of writing tools are equally important in the teaching and learning writing process. The teachers need to be aware of the students' learning styles and preference in order to select the appropriate writing tools. The constant change in the education system also contributes to the selection of writing tools. Therefore, teachers are required to be aware of these situations that may affect the students' learning, especially in writing.

Past Studies on Writing Tools

A good many studies were done to magnify the significance of writing tools in language classrooms to enhance writing skills. These previous studies indicated that writing tools positively and negatively influenced the students' learning. Chaikovska (2018) mentioned that students, particularly those majoring in technical fields, performed better in reading, writing, and speaking tasks when supported by visual aids, namely comic strips as the tool. In another study by Akdağ and Özkan (2017), one particular writing tool, blog or blogging, can be an effective tool in order to improve students' writing skills, motivation in writing and promote autonomous writing. Issues related to writing tasks have been difficult to tackle, particularly issues associated with students' motivation. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, will motivate the students to write more as it is used by many people (Sirait & Marlina, 2018). However, Sirait and Marlina (2018) also mentioned that the online writing tool may lead to plagiarism. Some studies depicted that some writing tools did not garner positive outcomes. Mahmud (2019) stated that the writing tool used in the study was not an appropriate tool for learning English writing because students only practised using simple English throughout the activities. On the other hand, students were asked to write ten journal entries throughout a study (Salambau et al., 2021). The result of the study found that journaling increased the students' motivation through the improvements of word counts and creativity exhibited in the journal entries. In another study (Mahmudah, 2016), action research was employed to observe the effectiveness of graphic organisers to improve writing. The usage of graphic organisers with the aid of scaffolded actions such as utilising dictionaries, providing feedback and marking the writing tasks exhibited students' improvement in writing and increased their motivation at the same time. Another study also utilised graphic organiser as scaffold in writing essays (Rahmat, 2018). The researcher added a graphic organiser as scaffold in the third step of the Selective Attention Writing Approach that was introduced to the students. The graphic organiser facilitated the students' information chunking and assisted them to produce academic writing pieces using colour codes.

The past studies displayed that the various writing tools to assist the students are beneficial, especially in enhancing students' writing skills. Even though the main focus of the usage of writing tools, other areas such as motivation and autonomous learning among the students showed improvements as well. The writing tools acted as scaffolds for the students which then led to the enhancement of students' writing performance. However, some studies also found disadvantages, though minimal, while incorporating writing tools in the lessons.

These situations can be avoided through reflection throughout the research period as the researchers, facilitators or teachers may fix the issues regarding the tool to ensure the efficacy of the writing tools in the classrooms.

Method

The chosen method to conduct the systematic review is based on five stages proposed as by Khan et al. (2003). This five-stages process aided the reviewer to produce a well-written systematic review. Google Scholar and Website of Science (WoS) were one the few databases used to search for online articles and journals. The five steps will be explained further based on the framework in Figure 1.

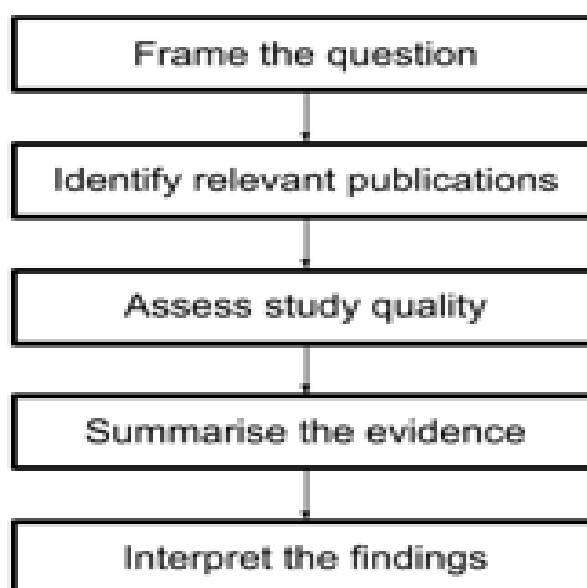


Figure 1: Procedure of Systematic Literature Review

Frame Questions for a Review

The first step of the process is developing the questions for the systematic review. Hence, the identification of the problem is crucial in this phase. The questions set a path for the reviewer to obtain the appropriate materials or journals based on the problem statement. In this case, the review intends to identify the tools used in teaching writing skills in ESL classrooms. Then, the most utilised approach is determined based on the tools employed in the past studies.

Identify Relevant Studies

The second step is searching for articles or journals associated with the keywords of the topic. This phase is divided into two parts; i) search for articles and journals which are relevant to the research topic and ii) collect those articles that fulfilled the criteria. In order to obtain a myriad of relevant articles, the reviewer used “Advanced Search Query” on WoS using keywords, namely “writing tools” and “writing skills”. With these keywords, 148 are available to review. To downsize the search, the search is refined by limiting to other keywords such as “ESL classrooms”, and “education” and which led to 84 articles. Furthermore, review papers are excluded as irrelevant. Google Scholar is also used to search for other journals or articles that may or may not have been dismissed in the search using similar keywords. Thus,

empirical studies published from the year 2018 until 2021 are selected as relevant for this paper.

Assess the Quality of Studies

The third step is assessing the quality of the studies found. The articles are refined by rechecking the relevance based on the research questions and objectives. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are the key in assessing the quality of articles. Based on Table 1, articles are selected to help the reviewer to answer the research questions. There are 3 criteria to be fulfilled as followed;

Table 1
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Tools used in teaching English writing skills	Tools used that were not related to teaching writing skills in ESL classrooms
The participants are from primary, secondary, or tertiary education background	The participants are from special education
Empirical studies on tools used in enhancing writing skills	Review papers on tools used in enhancing writing skills

Summarise the Evidence

According to Khan et al (2003), summarising the evidence in the research with multiple designs and quality is laborious. At first, the reviewer attempted to use 'Advanced Search Query' on Wos and Scopus databases using keywords 'writing tools' and 'essay writing'. These searches led to the compilation of hundreds of articles to be filtered and reviewed. Out of 148 articles with these keywords, 'English classrooms' and 'education', the reviewer is left with 84 articles to be read. To eliminate irrelevant articles, the reviewer also excluded articles that were published earlier than 2018. With the help of Google Scholar, the reviewer managed to find other articles that may or may not have been left out among 85 articles. Then, the reviewer factored out the 15 review papers and left with 69 articles. 54 articles were not matched with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Hence, only 16 articles remained. The results and findings of the articles will be discussed in depth in the next section.

Interpret the Findings

The final stage of the reviewing process is interpreting the findings. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are used to interpret the findings. Action research is also included. All articles that ran through the fourth step, summarising the evidence, will be scrutinised by identifying the writing tools used and the effectiveness of writing tools to enhance writing skills in ESL classrooms. The types of method used in the selected articles are based on Table 2 below.

Table 2

Numbers of articles based on types of methods

Types of method	Number of articles
Quantitative	3
Qualitative	5
Mixed	6
Action Research	2
Total	16

Findings

16 articles are selected based on the types or tools or intervention in studies dated from the year 2018 until 2021. The findings and results are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3*Result from Studies from 2018 until 2021*

Study	Participants	Types of Tools Used	Results
Arumugam et al. (2020)	30 students (control group) and 31 students (experimental group) in foundation programme preparing for MUET	Board game, <i>Figure It Out!</i>	Improved students' writing skills and reduced speaking anxiety in the classroom simultaneously.
			English language learning more interesting and gratifying
			Motivates students to communicate in English confidently and students were able to execute well in the ensuing game rounds and utilise expressions in writing tasks in the correct context
			An effective tool which allowed students to create a

Lie & Yunus (2018)	30 students from a primary school	<i>Penpal Schools</i> by participating in online collaborative project	sense of community inside and outside the classroom Created anticipation due to the engagement of authentic language exchanges with authentic audience, especially a few of them were native speakers
Mohammad et al. (2018)	12 students with age range of 16 – 17 years old	Google+	Aided both teachers and students in writing lessons, particularly knowledge generation, learning environment's appeal and enjoyment Students were able to grasp new knowledge in an engrossing environment
Abd Karim (2020)	23 ESL Diploma students, registered for a university course entitled 'Integrated Language Skills III' as taught in University of Technology MARA, Malaysia	Mobile-Assisted Mind Mapping Technique (MAMMAT); an online mind map data	Enhanced the writing skills among the students Beneficial such as aiding students to organise ideas before writing, generate more ideas to write as they can provide numerous examples, permit the students to list their points and enables them to elaborate the points,

			and general ideas efficiently
Yunus et al. (2019)	14 Year 5 students from two rural schools who faced difficulties in writing essays	<i>InstaWrite</i>	Enhance writing results and adhered to Subject-Verb Agreement
			Allowed students learn and correct their mistakes instantly Students basked the process of utilizing technology in essay writing rather than the traditional way
Xhama (2018)	67 of first year Bachelor students in the Faculty of Economics, University of Tirana and Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences, University of Medicine of Tirana, Albania	Corrective feedback	The environment provided for writing tasks was self-motivating that permitted the low proficiency students to interact with their peers of higher level while the teacher often facilitated within the peer-review environment
			Enhanced structure, grammar and spelling which made it a compulsory and invaluable tool for teacher to help the students
			Most teachers reckoned that the skill gained by critical feedback would remain with their students during the entire school year

Ibrahim et al (2018)	30 Form Four Pure Science Stream students	Virtual English Language Learning Programme (VELLP) using <i>Facebook</i> as the platform	Displayed positive improvement and responses from the students
			Proven to be effective and beneficial to improve writing aspects, especially in grammar and vocabulary enhancement
			Enabled students to familiarise with writing readily, hence boosted motivation and confidence while using the language
Suastra & Menggo (2020)	28 English Department students at Udayana University	Performance Assessment	Allowed students to develop writing skills
			Encouraged English students to be responsible and able to do self-assessment in writing progress
			Fostered students' interest and awareness, self-esteem, and motivation in the writing task
	4 ESL writing experts and 5 undergraduates from the Faculty of		Directed students to approach writing in a systematic manner
			Assisted autonomous learning

Vasu et al (2018)	Engineering, UTAR (second year of study for Bachelor's Degree programme)	Self- assessment Checklist	Students favoured the checklist because it guided them from one phase to another and encouraged them to write
Alouch et al (2021)	19 male students from Level 4 Class of the English Foundation Year Programme at King Abdul Aziz University	<i>Whatsapp</i>	Boosted students' motivation to learn and collaborate in the classroom Elevated and fortified the rapport among students and teachers Aided students to retain immediate contact with the teacher in the classroom that equipped them to enhance writing by amending their own mistakes and by learning from others' mistakes
Kazazoglu & Bilir (2021)	6 female 8 th grade students	<i>Storybird Web 2.0</i>	Motivated the students to write in the language A real audience provided an authentic language learning environment However, the major issue was technology literacy as mentioned by the students
			Active participations and students were

Hashim (2021)	24 Form 5 students with low to moderate level of English proficiency	<i>Pear Deck</i>	more involved in writing lessons during online ESL classrooms
Salambau et al (2021)	10 primary school students; 5 were from an urban school in Johor Bahru and 5 from Baram's rural school	<i>Lumos-Express</i>	Encouraged the students to write
Rashid et al (2019)	67 students from a mixed discipline including Islamic Studies, Science and Technology, and Economics and Management	<i>Padlet</i>	Encouraged students to complete tasks and interact with group members outside of the classroom
			Fostered collaboration among students
			Students gained varying language learning techniques when <i>Padlet</i> was integrated into the activities in the class
Kamal et al (2020)	10 Year 5 students with lower English proficiency from SJKC located in Perak	<i>Whatsapp Story</i>	Displayed an increase in students' performance, particularly accurate sentence construction
			Developed an interest among students to learn English due to their participation in <i>What's the Story?</i>

			Able to construct sentences in English with the aid of <i>Whatsapp</i> and scaffolding instruction
Sovakadan et al (2018)	27 students (experiemental group) and 25 students (control group) form a secondary school in Seberang Perai District, Pulau Pinang	i-Think Maps	Useful and practical by capturing students' interest
			Prompted students to consider possible words to be used
			Aided to develop content
			Instigated students to write

Discussion

The reviewer discussed the results and information gained from the studies based on the three objectives mentioned earlier namely, the most utilised writing tools based on type, the effectiveness of writing tools in ESL context and the disadvantages of incorporating writing tools in ESL classrooms. Each objective is deliberated in different paragraphs to ensure comprehensive reading.

Utilisation of Writing Tools based on Category

Table 4

Categories of writing tools used based on the articles

Category	Number of Articles
ICT	11
Non-ICT	5
Total	16

As displayed in Table 4, out 16 articles reviewed, the reviewer found 11 articles (69%) that integrated ICT tools in writing lessons to enhance writing skills among the students, while only 5 articles (31%) used the traditional methods which focused more on non-ICT tools or involved the pencil-and-paper methods. This result is supported by Mumtaz (2000) as the teacher's talks are gradually replaced by practices which incorporate multimedia technologies. Technologies are incorporated progressively into the programmes, courses, and curricula by the teachers (Mumtaz, 2000).

The reviewer sectioned the writing tools into two categories, namely ICT and non-ICT writing tools. The results depicted that ICT tools are predominantly used to enhance students' writing skills in ESL classrooms. As shown in Table 4, 11 articles (69%) incorporated ICT tools in order to enhance the students' writing skills. In certain articles, social media, particularly Whatsapp and Instagram, were in fact utilised for this purpose. Being on social media is preferred by the tech savvy generation to face- to-face interaction (Yunus et al., 2019). Integrating ICT tools into ESL classrooms, especially for writing, has become a trend among educators due to various reasons. For instance, Lumos-Express, a tool invented by Salambau et al (2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage students to write. The writing tool motivated students to write during online classes. Moreover, the integration of ICT tools in education is aligned with 21st century learning. With the aid of ICT, students can be equipped for life in the 21st century education (Salambau et al., 2020).

However, non-ICT tools were still considered as an option to be used in ESL writing lessons as the reviewer found 5 articles (31%) that utilised these tools, such as checklist and board game, as mentioned in Lie and Yunus (2018): Vasu et al (2018) respectively. Incorporating games-based learning, such as board games, put forward diversity to conventional classroom activities (Lie & Yunus, 2018). On the other hand, Vasu et al (2018) asserted that the checklist supported the students' autonomous learning, especially in writing. Moreover, the use of i-Think maps in writing lessons is perceived as useful and practical among the students (Kamal et al., 2020). It is advisable for educators and students to not disregard conventional tools or methods as it may be useful to enhance writing skills in ESL classrooms under certain circumstances.

The data in the table showed that ICT writing tools are preferably used to facilitate writing lessons. It has become a trend to enhance students' writing skills, especially in ESL classrooms. One of the reasons for this inclination of usage towards ICT tools most probably due to a few circumstances. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most educational institutions opted for online learning (Hashim, 2021). The ICT tools were used during online classes to aid students with their learning throughout the year. The non-ICT tools were deemed to be irrelevant during that particular year of schooling because face-to-face teaching and learning could not be carried out.

Effectiveness of the Writing Tools

These articles presented that writing tools came in handy in enhancing students' writing skills, regardless of the type of tools used. These writing tools indisputably enhanced writing skills in ESL classrooms. The reviewer found that the results from the studies indeed improved students' writing skills with other beneficial outcomes. The positive outcomes gained from the tools can be seen as shown in Table 3.

Provide Conducive Learning Environment

Integrating writing tools into ESL classrooms provides a conducive learning environment for the students. Xhama (2018) asserted that using the corrective feedback tool, the environment set for writing tasks was self-motivating which enabled the low proficiency students to communicate with their high achieving peers as the teacher facilitated often. The tool also became an aid for both parties, particularly increasing the appeal and excitement of the learning environment (Mohammad et al., 2018). Moreover, some of the tools provided an authentic audience for the students which heighten their learning experience. Due to the environment of engaging with an authentic audience, it triggered students' anticipation

during the lesson (Mohammad et al., 2018). Kazazoglu and Bilir (2021) also claimed that a real audience put forward an authentic language learning environment which then motivated students to write. Incorporating writing tools may positively shape the learning environment in ESL classrooms. The tool helped to produce gratifying English lessons for the students (Arumugam et al., 2020). Furthermore, by incorporating the writing tool, it created a supportive learning environment for the students which led to receiving remarks from teachers and peers an enjoyable experience (Kamal et al., 2020).

Integration of these writing tools demonstrated that they could provide a positive space to facilitate students' learning process, especially in writing. The educators should consider utilising writing tools as it can provide a better learning environment for students during the writing tasks. As presented in the results, the conducive learning environment contributed to the improvement of writing skills among the ESL students. It is proven that a conducive learning environment aids the learning better by integrating assistive tools in the classrooms.

Assist Autonomous Learning

Writing tools unequivocally foster autonomous learning among the students. This is aligned with a study done by Vasu et al (2018) as the self-assessment checklist assisted students to learn independently. Suastra and Menggo (2020) concurred that the writing tool promoted responsibility as a student and took charge of their own self-assessment in writing progress. Given the appropriate tools, students are able to be responsible for their own learning. On the other hand, instant messaging application platforms as a learning tool also allows the students to be accountable for their own learning. *Whatsapp* aided the students to contact the teacher in the classroom immediately that equipped them to enhance their writing skills by amending their own mistakes, at the same time, learning from the mistakes made by their peers (Alouch et al., 2021). In another study by Yunus et al (2019), the integration of social media platform, *Instagram*, also permitted students to learn and correct their mistakes instantaneously. These writing tools help the students to become aware of their progress and mistakes throughout the writing process. The responses to the errors ensure the continuous improvement in writing skills in ESL classrooms. On the other hand, the selection of topics also affected the students in using the tools. For instance, students were motivated to use i-Think maps when the topic was closely related to their topic of interest (Sovakandan et al., 2018). The personal encounters associated with the topic allowed students to be more engaged in the construction of the maps. This led to students to write easily due to their prior knowledge.

In order for students to be more responsible towards their own learning, the introduction of these tools is the best solution to it. Exposure to the usage of the writing tools enables students to become proactive and take charge of their own learning. However, teachers need to guide the students first in using the tools before giving the students full autonomy on the usage of the tools. By giving proper instructions, students are able to use the tools provided. Then, expectations on autonomous learning among the students can be expected.

Boost Motivation and Interest

One of the contributions of incorporating writing tools is boosting students' motivation and interest. As displayed in Table 3, the tools became a boost for the students, particularly their motivation and interests in ESL classrooms. The tools enabled students to accustom themselves with writing which led the students to be motivated and confident using the

language (Lie & Yunus, 2018). Suastra and Menggo (2020) also found that the tool developed their interest and awareness, confidence, as well as their confidence, in the writing tasks. The tool indeed motivated the students to write in the language (Mohammad et al., 2018). Self-motivation increased with the help of the writing tool (Xhama, 2018). Alouch et al (2021) concurred that the integration of writing tools in the writing lessons nurtured the students' motivation to learn and collaborate. The motivation and interest boosts are not only applicable in face-to-face classrooms, but also during the online classes during the pandemic. The tool was invented to support students' learning and it successfully motivated them to write during online classes period (Salambau et al., 2021). With the help of the writing tools, students became more concerned and participated actively in the writing lesson during online classes (Hashim, 2021). Motivation and interest are crucial in ESL classrooms due to the difficulty in acquiring the language. Aside from enhancing writing skills, the writing tools may help students to be highly motivated, confident, and interested to learn. In another study, i-Think maps captured the students' interest and prompted them to use possible vocabulary choices (Sovakandan et al., 2018). Sovakandan et al (2018) noted that the student's interest in drawing which related to the visuals, led to the consideration of using i-Think maps as fundamental to use grammar and organised the ideas in a systematic manner. The usage of the map instigated the students to write by elaborating and expanding ideas.

Motivation and interest towards learning to write are one of the aspects that needs to be prioritised as well. The findings demonstrated that motivated students are highly successful learners. Students are more motivated to learn during writing lessons with the help of writing tools.

Enhancement of Other Areas

The writing tools not only serve the purpose of improving writing skills, but also enhance certain areas of the language. Xhama (2018) asserted that the tool improved the students' sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. Kamal et al (2020) also underwent similar experience, as the result from the study depicted that the writing tool aided in accurate sentence construction. In a study conducted by Yunus et al (2019), the writing performance increased while adhering to the Subject-Verb Agreement. Grammar and vocabulary enhancement also occurred when the teacher incorporated the tool in the writing lesson (Ibrahim et al., 2018). It may well be argued that writing skills are not the only area that showed improvement. Not only the tool improved writing skills, but it also reduced students' anxiety which enabled them to speak and communicate confidently in the classroom (Arumugam et al., 2020). In the same study, the researchers asserted that it also developed students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the integration of ICT tools in writing tasks plays a part in this matter as well. Mohammad et al (2018) found that the students' IT skills improved while using the writing tool during the lesson. The writing tools are useful in enhancing writing skills and they are able to improve students' performance as a whole. Succeeding in improving writing skills is not the sole objective to integrate writing tools in ESL classrooms. Based on the previous studies, the tools also managed to enhance other language or non-language related skills.

The usage of writing tools does not only enhance students' writing skills, but also other areas such as grammar and vocabulary. Enhancing writing skills is the main objective of integrating writing tools. However, other areas are also showing improvements among the students. Therefore, teachers need to consider using tools in the classrooms to ease the teaching and learning process.

The efficacy of the writing tools to improve writing skills are portrayed in the studies discussed above. It is evident that the tools are significantly helpful in improving the students' performance in writing.

Disadvantages of Incorporating Writing Tools in ESL Classrooms

Although the writing tools benefited in improving writing skills, there were also disadvantages. To incorporate these tools, it is significant to identify the barriers beforehand in order to ensure the success of the tools to improve writing skills. Kazazoglu and Bilir (2021) stated that the major issue of utilising the tool was technology literacy among the students. It would be a futile attempt if the students are unable to manoeuvre the ICT writing tool. The inadequate facilities to fully utilise the tool also contributed to this issue. Even though only a minority of the students in a study done by Lie and Yunus (2018) claimed that they had insufficient resources such as Internet connection, computers, or laptops, it led to inability to complete the task. This situation depicted that there are still rooms for improvement in providing every student with adequate facilities. As for non-ICT writing tools, Vasu et al (2018) experienced a hiccup in the beginning of the session as the respondents were unclear on the complex steps and recursive nature of writing. Sovakandan et al (2018) asserted that the students required guidance consistently while using the tool, particularly in identifying the proper vocabulary and construction of grammatically correct sentences. This situation may be due to the students' low language proficiency to translate the ideas obtained in English (Sovakandan et al., 2018). Therefore, the students need to be exposed to proper ways of writing in order to utilise the tool effectively. The drawbacks, despite the minimal counts, should not be disregarded as the prime objective of the writing tools is to improve the students' writing skills. To achieve complete success, all students need to be able to complete the writing tasks by minimising the gap of many contributing factors to the issues.

Conclusion

It is recommended for the teachers to incorporate writing tools in ESL classrooms. All 16 articles proved that writing tools, regardless of the types, are beneficial to both teachers and students in order to improve students' writing skills. The usage of ICT tools in writing is progressively becoming more pertinent in education, particularly ESL classrooms. These tools were able to provide conducive learning environments and support autonomous learning. In addition, the tools managed to boost students' motivation and confidence in the classroom. The focus of the tools was not only to improve writing skills, but also enhance other areas such as grammar and spelling simultaneously. The articles showed that integration of ICT tools to enhance students' writing skills were preferred by the students. It demonstrated that the ICT tools are a trending tool in language classrooms. The relevance of the usage of the tools may be due to various reasons as discussed earlier. However, the non-ICT tools in writing should not be dismissed as it can be useful in other circumstances as the studies portrayed similar positive outcomes with the other studies associated with ICT writing tools. Teachers need to be more creative to reform non-ICT tools to ensure variety and efficacy. Physical writing tools still aid the students in writing tasks especially in the face-to-face classrooms effectively if the tools are used in a proper way. Despite the high success rate of the writing tools, there were minor disadvantages which should be taken into consideration, namely technology literacy, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, and complexity of the tools. Students also needed frequent guidance while using the tools in a few aspects, such as vocabulary choices and sentence construction, to help the students to expand their ideas in

the language. For future research, the reviewer proposes to future reviewers to focus on students' perceptions in utilising writing tools in ESL classrooms. In conclusion, it is advisable for teachers to integrate writing tools in writing lessons to produce students with good English writing commands tools in writing lessons to produce students with good English writing commands.

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