ỨNG DỤNG CÔNG NGHỆ ĐỂ THU HÚT SINH VIÊN VÀO HOẠT ĐỘNG HỌC VIẾT TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC LẠC HỒNG

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TÓM TẮT

Bài viết này nghiên cứu tác động của công nghệ đến việc dạy viết cho sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Lạc Hồng. Sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp, các nhà nghiên cứu đã khảo sát 120 sinh viên và 6 giảng viên, phân tích hiệu quả của các công cụ và chiến lược sử dụng công cụ công nghệ khác nhau trong việc cải thiện sự tham gia của sinh viên trong bốn lớp học môn viết, cũng như thái độ của cả sinh viên và giảng viên đối với việc tích hợp công nghệ vào việc hướng dẫn học viết. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy rằng việc khai thác các công cụ công nghệ để dạy viết có thể gia tăng sự tham gia của sinh viên. Tuy nhiên, thái độ đối với việc tích hợp công nghệ có sự khác biệt giữa sinh viên và giảng viên, cùng với một số quan điểm bày tỏ thắc mắc về tác động của các công cụ đối với các phương pháp giảng dạy thông thường. Các phát hiện cho thấy rằng công nghệ có thể là một công cụ hiệu quả để hỗ trợ việc giảng dạy kĩ năng viết, nhưng việc triển khai áp dụng cần được giải quyết một cách thận trọng dựa trên thái độ và nhu cầu của cả sinh viên và giảng viên.

INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN WRITING CLASSES AT LAC HONG UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the impact of technology on writing instruction for English majors at Lac Hong University. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers surveyed 120 students and six instructors and analyzed the effectiveness of various technological tools and strategies in improving students' participation in four writing classes, as well as the attitudes of both students and instructors towards technology integration into writing instructions. The research findings reveal that exploiting technological tools for the teaching of writing can give rise to improved participation among students. However, attitudes towards technology integration differ amongst students and instructors, with some expressing wonders about its impact on conventional teaching methods. The findings suggest that technology can be a proficient device to support writing instruction, but its implementation should be deliberately tackled in light of the attitudes and needs of both students and instructors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective writing competencies are vital to academic and professional success (Darics [1]), particularly for English-majored students at Lac Hong University. In fact, traditional methods of writing instruction may not always be productive in engaging students leading to a passive learning environment (Alqhtani [2]). In Vietnm, conventional writing classes often prioritize grammar and vocabulary acquisition and practice. However, research has shown that this approach does not necessarily lead to improved writing skills and increased students' attention. For instance, Nguyen [3] identified the following problems with traditional writing classes in Vietnam: an emphasis on syntax and vocabulary at the expense of discourse and genre expertise, a scarcity of practical writing assignments and feedback, and a lack of possibilities for collaboration and engagement. Correspondingly, Bui and Nguyen [4] noticed that students also failed to show confidence in their writing ability due to insufficient writing activities for pair and group work. In other Asian contexts, akin problems in writing classes still arise; obviously, some findings have been reported. In his study in Korean contexts, Lee [5] also claimed that traditional writing classes were teacher-centered and did not provide enough opportunities for students to practice writing. According to Alharthi [6], students had few opportunities to expose themselves to authentic language resources resulting from the absence of technical use by their professors.

Thankfully, technology has rapidly emerged as a promising tool for enhancing writing instruction and promoting student engagement. Continuously appearing in teaching and learning English, e-learning software such as Kahoot, Quiziz, Quizlet, Liveworksheets, etc. facilitates teaching methodology in designing diverse and captivating activities. Many articles explore students' and instructors' perceptions of other technological tools in writing instruction. Specifically, a study by Nguyen and Pham [7] proposed the application of Jamboard because the learning process was transformed into a more interactive and engaging practice while improving writing skills. Moreover, Pham and Nguyen [8] suggested the deployment of Padlet in a writing course aroused students' interest, as it developed students' writing skills and increased collaboration. Besides, instructors also had optimistic assessments towards using technology. Especially, in Vietnam, Nguyen and Nguyen [9] argued that "the use of Mentimeter in writing instruction can benefit both EFL teachers and learners as it provides an engaging and interactive platform for learners to express their ideas and thoughts, while also allowing teachers to instantly receive feedback and monitor student progress" (p. 241). Also, in Korea, Kim and Lee [10] reported that instructors had positive attitudes toward using Padlet due to its power to create a more student-centered learning environment. Along with aforementioned example devices, the study conducted Chen and Chen [11] emphasized that EdTech tools, such as digital writing tools, online collaborative tools, and online feedback tools, could substantially students' writing performance, motivation, and engagement.

In reality, teaching and learning writing skills are considered monotonous practices. Typical causes for this phenomenon are associated with the burden of lectures assigned accordingly to the curriculum, the unvaried traditional teaching methodology, and most importantly, the reluctant and passive cooperation from learners. With the earnest hope of changing students' attitudes towards writing courses and promoting their success at Lac Hong University, we conducted this research to provide valuable insights into how various technological tools can leverage students' engagement, as well as examine the attitudes of both students and instructors towards technology integration. To provide a deeper understanding of the advancements in this area, two research questions are established:

- How does the integration of technology in writing instruction affect English-majored students' engagement at Lac Hong University?

- What are the attitudes of both students and instructors towards technology integration in writing instruction at Lac Hong University?

2. CONTENT

2.1 Research methods

- **Participants**

The participants in this study included six English language instructors and 120 English-majored sophomores at Lac Hong University. They worked and studied at the Faculty of English Language. All of them were informed about the research purpose and provided with consent forms before taking part in the study.

- **Data collection instruments**

Three data collection methods were applied, including questionnaires, interviews, and observation.

According to Creswell [12], questionnaires provide standardized data, making it easier to compare and analyze responses. Moreover, "questionnaires have proven to be valuable instruments in EFL research, providing researchers with a means of collecting large amounts of data from a diverse range of participants in a relatively short period of time" (Wu & Lee, [13]). In this survey, a 15-item questionnaire with multiple choice and open-ended questions was composed, checked for appropriateness, and distributed to 120 respondents to gather information.

In regards to interview, "interviews offer the opportunity to explore complex issues in greater depth, allowing for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences" (Smith et al., [14], p. 77). Accordingly, 10 questions for the interview were carefully reviewed and examined to access writing professors' teaching techniques and viewpoints on the application of new technology.

Finally, observation has been described as "a particularly effective research tool in EFL classrooms, providing insights into teaching and learning practices that may not be captured through other data collection methods" (Cheng & Zhang, [15]). Therefore, two observation lists were prepared to assess both lecturers' and students' behaviours during 4 writing sessions.

- **Data collection procedures**

This research was implemented over a period of 8 months, starting from August 2022 and ending in April 2023. To stricly follow the procedures, the researchers designed thorough plans and set standard steps as followed.

First, before gathering any data, the researchers had to obtain informed consent from all the participants, which involved informing them about the research's objectives, what their involvement in the study would entail, and any potential risks or advantages. To ensure data completeness and accuracy, the researchers distributed the questionnaires to participants and collected them immediately after completion. The researchers also participated in the survey as guides, providing an interpretation of questions in Vietnamese and support to minimize potential misunderstandings between the research objectives and participants' understanding.

Second, to conduct classroom observation, it was crucial to ensure privacy, informed consent, and confidentiality beforehand to avoid inherent ethical concerns. Once resolving these issue satisfactorily, the researchers used a recording device to take comprehensive notes and record the behaviours and actions performed during the observation.

Next, each face-to-face interview for in-depth responses lasted 10 minutes. The information was recorded to facilitate the information recall. All of the processes were permitted by the interviewees.

Finally, the researchers synthesized and analyzed the data from questionnaires, interviews, and observations in the findings and discussion.

2.2 Findings and Discussion

2.2.1 The impact of technology integration on students' engagement in writing classes
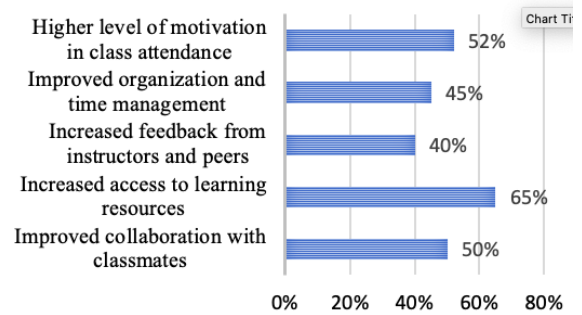

Figure 1. *The impact of technology use in writing classes*

The figures illustrate the percentage of students who responded to the aspects resulting from the application of networked instructions in writing classes. 50% of the respondents asserted that technological tools offered opportunities to work with their classmates instead of struggling alone in writing activities. Furthermore, 65% of responses from the questionnaire proved that with the increase of online assisted learning tools, students easily accessed updated teaching methods in the era of the 4.0 industrial revolution. Additionally, instructors' feedback was highly appreciated, with 40% reporting that it facilitated students' writing competence and 45% of participants asserting that developed organization and time management skills enabled them to concentrate and achieve their learning goals. Finally, the most encouraging thing was that students were more willing to attend writing classes than paper-and-pen writing classes.

The findings suggest that the incorporation of technological devices explores students' learning potential. By observing these figures, educators are more aware of the significant influence of using the learning devices to support their teaching process and assist students' learning outcomes.

2.2.2 Learners' feedback toward technology integration in writing instructions

- **Learners' difficulties in using techonology tools**

Figure 2. *Learners' difficulties in using EdTech tools*

The data about how technology hindered students from participating in classroom activities showed that 15% of the students did not encounter any difficulties. Nevertheless, 36.6% said that they needed additional technical support due to difficulty in logging in or unstable Wi-Fi connection when participating in the assigned activity. According to 48.2% of the students, they could not keep up with the progress of the questions,

easily distracted when taking the online test. Probably, they preferred to voice their ideas directly to submit answers on technology-based tools. Only 5.3% claimed that these online activities reduced their face-to-face interactions with teachers and classmates. In related studies in the same field, the authors observed that students' challenges included " technical difficulties, lack of familiarity with the tools, or insufficient teacher guidance on their use" (Zhang & Kenny, [16], p. 5), and "a lack of training in using technology tools, limited access to digital resources" (Wang & Chen, [17], p. 200).

From the above synthesis, instructors should pay special attention to these situations to provide the necessary assistance. If applied flexibly, activities carried out on the digital technology platform are optimized and highly effective for students.

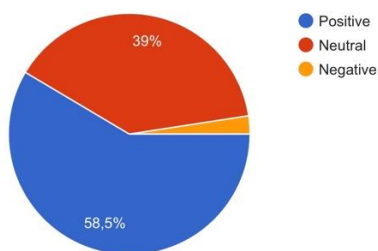- **Learners' feedback on the use of technology tools**

Figure 3. *Learners' feedback on the use of EdTech tools*

According to the data acquired, 58.5% of students felt positively about the incorporation of technology tools into writing sessions. The findings also made it very evident that most of this group valued technological applications in instruction writing. They also expected it to enhance the quality of their writing. In addition, 39% of respondents showed a large percentage of neutrality. According to the statistics, these students still had little exposure to or experience with the new technology application. These students still had minimal exposure to or experience with the new technology application, according to the statistics. They were therefore unconvinced in their opinion on this application. Finally, just 2.5% of students expressed negative sentiments about this matter. It may be assumed that these students did not benefit from the technology-integrated writing classes. They presumably did not understand the benefits of these tools or had technical discussion forums for supporting and clarifying students' misunderstandings difficulties to prevent negative impact owing to the use of classroom technology. Further sharings also claimed that Word Processing Software, Google Docs, and other online writing programs such as Grammarly or Quillbot facilitated and polished students' writing work.

Overall, students' sentiments regarding enrolling in a technical writing class were generally positive. In another study, Xu and Zheng [18] agreed that "technical writing courses helped them improve their language proficiency,

as well as their ability to communicate effectively in technical contexts" (p.35). It advises lecturers to fully utilize the introduction and application of technological tools when creating lesson plans to make every class meeting a more engaging and dynamic environment for teaching and learning.

2.2.3 Lecturers' attitudes towards technology integration in writing instructions

Six composition lecturers who attended the interview, as well as four academics who participated in the observation, made clear and distinct statements regarding the incorporation of technology into teaching methods. Previously, professors would typically lead brainstorming sessions with little input from students. However, all interviewees claimed that having access to online learning resources had enabled them to deliver lectures more effectively and engagingly.

All of the interviewers were especially keen to share examples of how they integrated EdTech technologies into their classroom settings, providing information about the way they integrated these new modern techniques into three-stage writing sessions.

- Pre-writing stage: Three instructors said that they started each lesson by arousing students' interest using Kahoot, Quizizz, Quizlet, and Mentimeter. A more intense conversational environment also emerged in the classroom setting. Surprisingly, one respondent used Jamboard and Padlet as a tool to "check attendance" and warm up his writing instruction such that all of the students participated fully and passionately in the first stage of the exercise. Furthermore, to review writing fundamentals like structure, grammar, and useful language more effectively, one non-native lecturer supported that he used Quizizz and Kahoot. "It goes without saying that these technologies made the courses more welcoming and interesting to students", said one lecturer.

- While-writing stage: Five lecturers noted that throughout the writing period, they received more feedback from their students since they showed a greater sense of commitment and responsibility by presenting their writing assignments on time. Additionally, the lecturers set up a discussion board using Google Form and received a significant amount of feedback from their students.

- Post-writing stage: In addition to the peer-editing tasks, some of the participants designed follow-up activities using Internet tools to summarize and review the lessons. They also used the university's e-learning system to upload homework assignments and facilitate class

Overall, the instructors provided numerous features of applied EdTech tool in writing instructions during the observations and interviews. They genuinely admitted having high hopes about this application, but they also

asserted that these tools would be useful if used and designed in conjunction with lesson objectives and students' learning outcomes. The collected information agreed with the statement of Zhang and Kenny [19]: "technology tools would only be useful if they were used and designed in conjunction with students' learning objectives" (p.5).

2.2.4. Recommendations for the application of digital teaching tools in writing classes at Lac Hong University

Based on the findings discussed above, instructors can effectively use digital resources to teach writing skills in a way that aligns with the course learning objectives. At Lac Hong University, digital tools can be utilized to evaluate students' process scores and enhance student engagement. The following recommendations can be considered to promote student success in writing classes.

- Use context-based tools: To optimize the effectiveness of digital tools, instructors can use context-based software to facilitate students' writing process. For instance, when the aim of the lesson is to develop ideas for paragraph writing using brainstorming or mind map techniques, instructors can introduce collaborative tools such as Mindmeister, MindMup, or Miro to enable students to work in groups and discuss ideas. Similarly, for lessons focused on argumentative writing, students can use digital tools like DebateGraph or Slido to form and present their arguments.

- Track students' progress: To monitor students' progress, it is crucial to review their work submitted through online software. Padlet or Peergrade can be useful tools for this purpose. Instructors can create a Padlet board or a Peergrade class for students and ask them to post their drafts, revisions, and final copies on a weekly basis. This will enable instructors to assess the progress of each student and provide relevant feedback. Moreover, this process facilitates peer-editing tasks and helps students learn from each other. Instructors can also share their rubrics with students as a foundation for understanding the standards required to achieve excellent grades.

- Provide instant assistance: To facilitate students in using online EdTech tools effectively, it is essential for instructors to provide instant support when students encounter difficulties. Instructors should be aware of the inconvenience that students may face and offer solutions to help them overcome these issues. Video tutorials, step-by-step instructions, and direct consultations can be effective means to help students become proficient in using digital tools and meeting instructors' requirements.

In summary, the appropriate use of digital tools in line with the course learning outcomes is a critical factor in teaching writing skills. Additionally, writing instructors have a significant role in providing necessary support to

ensure that students are proficient in using modern application tools. Through this approach, students can enhance their writing competency and achieve their learning objectives.

3. CONCLUSION

This study investigates how technology has affected the teaching of writing to English majors at Lac Hong University. To conduct this research, a mixed-methods approach was used, including a survey of 120 students and interviews with six instructors. Through observation of four writing classes, the authors gained insight into the students' and instructors' attitudes towards technology integration, as well as the effectiveness of various technological tools and strategies in enhancing student engagement. The results indicate that technology can become an effective tool for improving writing instruction, but its application needs critical reflection to maximize its benefits.

Although this study has been conducted on a small scale, it highlights the importance of incorporating modern technology tools into writing instruction. The advancement of technical tools has improved communication between lecturers and students, and most importantly, it has the potential to enhance students' success in learning writing.

However, this research has certain limitations as it has been conducted with a small number of participants and methods. Therefore, caution should be taken when generalizing the research findings to other EFL or ESL contexts. Further research could compare students' competence in non-networked and technology-based writing classes to determine the maximum impact of writing education on university students.

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