

The Role of Information and Communication Technology in EFL Students' Writing Creativity Development

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Abstract

This study used a qualitative research approach. This research aims to find out how students see the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in improving writing creativity. The researcher gathered 8 4th semester English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. The researcher collected data through questionnaires and interviews. This is evidenced by the percentage of 50% of the total frequency of 4 out of 8 students who strongly agree that the existence of information and communication technology can improve writing creativity. The percentage who agree with the existence of information and communication technology can improve writing creativity is 37.5% with 3 students, and the percentage who disagree with the existence of information and communication technology can improve writing creativity is 12.5% with 1 student, and there are no students who strongly disagree with the existence of information and communication technology can develop writing creativity.

Keywords: *ICT, EFL students, writing creativity*

Introduction

Writing is an indispensable skill in communication, allowing individuals to effectively express thoughts, ideas, and knowledge. In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing is crucial for fostering creativity and enhancing cognitive abilities. Forms of writing such as articles, essays, reports, and stories are essential for both academic and personal growth, requiring mastery of language structure, vocabulary, and graphology to convey messages with clarity and impact. In today's educational landscape, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into teaching and learning processes is vital. ICT, encompassing tools

like computers, the internet, social media platforms, and software applications, has transformed traditional teaching methods, offering new opportunities to enrich learning experiences, especially in language education. Despite the advancements in ICT, effectively integrating these technologies into the curriculum to enhance writing creativity among EFL students remains challenging. Many students struggle to utilize these tools optimally due to a lack of proficiency or familiarity. Additionally, while some students find ICT helpful in developing their writing skills, others encounter difficulties in accessing reliable resources or face distractions that hinder their creative processes.

This research aims to investigate the perceptions of fourth-semester English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang regarding the role of ICT in developing their writing creativity. The study seeks to understand how students use ICT tools, how these tools influence their motivation and creativity in writing, and the challenges they face in integrating ICT into their writing processes. It is anticipated that the results of this study will give educators and legislators important information for creating ICT-integrated EFL writing courses. The study's conclusions might be useful in determining the best ways to use technology to improve kids' writing creativity and solve their problems. Additionally, the study may advance knowledge of ICT's function in language instruction and its capacity to revolutionise conventional teaching and learning strategies. The research focuses on fourth-semester English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. It examines their perceptions and experiences with using ICT tools to develop writing creativity. The study employs qualitative methods, including questionnaires and interviews, to gather data from the participants. The scope includes analyzing the effectiveness of various ICT tools and identifying the factors that influence their successful integration into the writing curriculum.

Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted on the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in education, with a focus on how it helps students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) develop their writing abilities and creativity. ICT has a positive effect on students' writing performance, creativity, and motivation, as evidenced by numerous research. Alkhaldi (2023) carried out research on how technology affects Jordanian students' creative writing. The results showed that pupils' writing abilities, lexical knowledge, and inventiveness all greatly increased when they used technology. When it came to their writing assignments, students who used technology demonstrated increased inventiveness and involvement. In a similar vein, Bakeer (2018) looked into how social media and ICT helped Al-Quds Open University students improve their writing abilities. The study found that encouraging students to write and improving their writing skills were two benefits of incorporating social media and ICT resources into writing teaching.

Pentury, Anggraeni, and Pratama (2020) explored the use of creative writing to develop 21st-century skills among students. The study highlighted that ICT tools, such as digital storytelling and collaborative writing platforms, provided students with opportunities to express their creativity and improve their writing skills. The research emphasized the importance of incorporating creative writing exercises that utilize technology to enhance students' learning experiences. ICT integration into EFL writing courses continues to face a number of obstacles, notwithstanding its advantages. Barriers include restricted access to resources, technical issues, and a lack of training for instructors to use ICT tools successfully were noted by Rababah (2019). The study underlined how important it is

for professional development programmes to give teachers the tools they need to successfully incorporate technology into their lesson plans.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in enhancing writing creativity among fourth-semester English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. The qualitative approach is suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in using ICT tools for writing. The research design involves the use of questionnaires and interviews to collect data from the participants. The participants in this study are eight fourth-semester English students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. These students were selected through purposive sampling, a non-random technique that allows the researcher to select participants who have specific characteristics relevant to the study. The criteria for selection included students' familiarity with ICT tools and their willingness to participate in the study.

Two primary data collection instruments were used in this study: questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data on students' perceptions and experiences with ICT tools in developing their writing creativity. It consisted of 20 statements related to the use of ICT, access to information, the impact on writing quality, and the challenges faced. The responses were measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). This instrument helped in quantifying the level of agreement or disagreement among the participants regarding various aspects of ICT usage. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative data. This method allowed for a deeper exploration of students' experiences and provided insights into the reasons behind their perceptions. The interview guide included open-ended questions focusing on the types of ICT tools used, the impact of easy access to information on writing quality, the influence of ICT on creative expression, and the challenges encountered while using these tools. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and was recorded for accuracy.

The data collection process began with the distribution of questionnaires to the selected participants. The students were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires, ensuring thoughtful and accurate responses. Following the questionnaire completion, semi-structured interviews were scheduled with each participant. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and comfortable setting to facilitate open and honest communication. The researcher ensured confidentiality and anonymity of the participants to encourage candid responses.

The data analysis process involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The responses from the questionnaires were coded and entered into a statistical software program. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were calculated to summarize the data. The Likert scale responses were analyzed to determine the overall perception of the role of ICT in writing creativity development. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and patterns in the responses. The process involved coding the data, categorizing the codes into themes, and interpreting the themes to understand the students' experiences and challenges. This method allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' views and provided rich, detailed insights into their use of ICT for writing.

Results

This section presents the findings from the questionnaires and interviews conducted with eight fourth-semester English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. The data collected provided insights into the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in developing writing creativity among EFL students.

Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements measured on a Likert scale, with responses ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The results are summarized in Table 1 below:

Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
ICT enhances my writing creativity	4 (50%)	3 (37.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0
Easy access to information via ICT affects writing quality	5 (62.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	0
ICT helps in expressing creativity	4 (50%)	3 (37.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0
Encounter difficulties using ICT for writing	2 (25%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)
ICT makes writing tasks easier	5 (62.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	0
Prefer traditional methods over ICT for writing	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	3 (37.5%)	3 (37.5%)
ICT tools motivate me to write creatively	4 (50%)	3 (37.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0
ICT access improves my ability to develop creative ideas	5 (62.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	0

The data indicate that the majority of students perceive ICT as beneficial for their writing creativity, with 87.5% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that ICT enhances their writing creativity. However, a notable percentage of students (62.5%) also reported encountering difficulties while using ICT tools.

Interview Results

The semi-structured interviews provided more in-depth insights into the students' experiences and challenges with ICT in writing. The key themes identified from the interviews are as follows:

Positive Impact of ICT on Writing Creativity: Most students acknowledged that ICT tools such as Google, social media platforms, and writing applications like Canva and Wattpad have significantly enhanced their creativity. These tools offer a wide range of resources and inspiration, enabling students to explore and develop their writing skills.

Example: *One student mentioned, "Using Canva helps me create visually appealing content, which in turn inspires me to be more creative in my writing."*

Challenges with ICT Usage: Despite the benefits, students reported several

challenges, including technical difficulties, distractions, and the need for more guidance on effectively using ICT tools. Some students found it hard to locate reliable information or experienced issues with the functionality of certain applications. *A student expressed, "Sometimes the information I need isn't available, or I have trouble using the technology correctly, which hinders my writing process."* Preference for ICT over Traditional Methods: While a minority of students still preferred traditional methods, the majority favored using ICT for writing due to the ease of access to information and the variety of tools available to aid creativity. *A student stated, "I find it easier to brainstorm and organize my ideas using digital tools than writing by hand."* Students highlighted the necessity for better training and support in using ICT tools. They suggested workshops and tutorials to help them maximize the potential of these technologies in their writing. One student recommended, "Workshops on how to effectively use writing applications and online resources would be very helpful."

Discussion

The study's findings are in line with past research that shown the importance of ICT in helping EFL students become more creative writers. The responses to the questionnaire and the interview show how ICT tools help students become more creative and proficient writers. Pupils benefit from the wealth of resources and inspiration that ICT makes possible, which improves their writing and creative expression skills. Nonetheless, the difficulties that students encounter draw attention to the necessity of improving ICT integration within the curriculum. The efficient use of these technologies can be hampered by technical issues and a lack of direction, indicating the need for more organised support and training. Teachers should think about putting professional development programmes into place so they can get the tools necessary to help pupils use ICT for writing.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of a comprehensive approach to integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in enhancing students' writing creativity. While many students acknowledged the benefits of using ICT tools like Google, social media platforms, and applications such as Canva and Wattpad, they also reported significant challenges. These challenges include technical difficulties, distractions from the abundance of online content, and a lack of structured guidance on how to effectively utilize these tools for creative writing. This suggests that while ICT has the potential to greatly enhance the creative writing process, its effectiveness is contingent on the provision of adequate training and support for both students and educators. Without such support, the potential benefits of ICT may be undermined by the very obstacles it introduces. Moreover, the preference of some students for traditional writing methods highlights the need for a blended learning approach that accommodates diverse learning styles. While ICT tools offer unparalleled access to resources and can stimulate creativity, they may not be equally effective for all students. Some may find the tactile experience of writing by hand more conducive to their creative process, allowing them to organize their thoughts more deliberately. Therefore, educators should consider incorporating both traditional and digital writing practices into the curriculum, providing students with the flexibility to choose the methods that best support their individual learning needs. This blended approach could foster a more inclusive educational environment, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience.

This study set out to explore the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in enhancing writing creativity among fourth-semester English students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. Through a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, valuable insights were gained into students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges associated with using ICT tools for writing.

1. **Positive Impact on Creativity:** The majority of students reported that ICT significantly enhances their writing creativity. Tools such as Google, social media platforms, and writing applications like Canva and Wattpad provide extensive resources and inspiration, enabling students to develop and express their creative ideas more effectively.
2. **Challenges in ICT Usage:** Despite the benefits, students also encountered several challenges, including technical difficulties, distractions, and the need for better guidance on using ICT tools. These obstacles can hinder the effective use of technology in writing, indicating a need for more structured support.
3. **Preference for ICT Tools:** While some students still prefer traditional methods, the majority favor using ICT for writing due to the ease of access to information and the variety of creative tools available. This suggests that integrating ICT into the curriculum can be highly beneficial, although a blended approach might be necessary to cater to diverse preferences.
4. **Need for Training and Support:** Students highlighted the necessity for improved training and support in using ICT tools. Workshops and tutorials on effectively utilizing these technologies can help maximize their potential and overcome existing challenges.

Implications for Educators and Policymakers

The findings of this study suggest several implications for educators and policymakers:

- **Integrating ICT into the Curriculum:** There is a clear need to incorporate ICT tools into the EFL writing curriculum. These tools can provide students with diverse resources and opportunities to enhance their creativity and writing skills.
- **Professional Development for Educators:** Training programs for educators can equip them with the necessary skills to guide students in effectively using ICT for writing. This can help address the technical difficulties and lack of guidance reported by students.
- **Blended Learning Approaches:** Combining traditional writing practices with ICT tools can cater to diverse student preferences and enhance the overall learning experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the significant role that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays in enhancing the writing creativity of EFL students. The majority of students in the study expressed that ICT tools like social media platforms, Google, Canva, and Wattpad have provided them with abundant resources and inspiration, which has positively influenced their writing creativity. These findings align with previous research that highlights the potential of ICT in fostering creativity and improving writing skills in language learning contexts. However, the study also identified several challenges that students face when using these tools, such as technical difficulties, distractions, and a lack of proper guidance. These challenges suggest that

while ICT can be a powerful tool for enhancing writing creativity, its successful integration into the curriculum requires careful planning and support.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for a blended approach to writing instruction that incorporates both traditional and digital methods. While most students prefer using ICT tools, a minority still find value in traditional writing practices. This preference underscores the importance of offering a flexible learning environment that caters to diverse student needs. Educators should be equipped with the necessary training to effectively guide students in utilizing ICT for creative writing while also recognizing and accommodating those who may benefit from traditional methods. By addressing these challenges and adopting a more inclusive approach, educational institutions can better support the development of writing creativity among EFL students.

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