Chapter 9
Collaborative Discussion Using Padlet to Enhance the Teaching and Learning of Essay Writing in Mandarin Language

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ABSTRACT

Writing skills demand the best pedagogical practices to engage students who struggle with essay writing. In line with the fast-paced, ever-evolving digital advancement, instructors are encouraged to transform their teaching method by integrating technology to help to improve students' writing skills. To do so, one of the ways is to adopt technological tools such as collaborative learning tools in their writing courses to make learning more interactive, interesting, and stimulating. This research, therefore, attempts to examine how Padlet can be utilized to transform didactic teaching and learning into innovative pedagogy to create new learning experiences for tertiary undergraduates. The undergraduates were instructed to use Padlet in their writing task, and this provides many opportunities for constructive learning through a resource-based approach where undergraduates learn from one another and the instructor shows well-written examples or incorrect sentences posted by the undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

In this twenty first century, the rapid growth of technologies has shaped the way humans interact with each other from different parts of the world. These changes have also shaped the way people acquire knowledge, and teach with technologies (Almerich, Orellana, Rodríguez, & García, 2016; Guolifang et al, 2019). Due to that, learning can happen anytime and anywhere beyond boundaries via Internet (Bilici, Guzey, & Yamak, 2016). The development of educational technology creates a golden opportunity for lecturers to apply and integrate various tools such as iPad, Smartboard, laptop, mobile, web-based tool and much more (Bilici et al., 2016). However, higher education institutions are facing great challenges to ensure that faculty members (lecturers) are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge to incorporate technology that often evolve rapidly into teaching and learning process (Almerich et al., 2016; Bower, 2016). There is currently empirical evidence showing that lecturers are incorporating technology in the classroom to a certain level (Angeli & Valanides, 2009; Almerich et al., 2016), and this indicates that research on technology integration in higher education should not be limited to examining lecturers' usage of technology in teaching but should also focus on students' learning processes when using technology in the classroom. Another area of concern when using technology is to transform didactic form of teaching and learning into innovative pedagogy to create new learning experiences for students (Angeli & Valanides, 2009).

The quality of teaching practices indirectly influences the students' learning and outcome considering the fact that lecturers are the powerful agent to propose, implement and experience the use of technology in teaching and learning process (Almerich et al., 2016; Ward & Parr, 2010). As a result, they need to be well equipped themselves not only with the knowledge of technology but also with the ability to design learning tasks that incorporate technology beyond transmission of knowledge and drill-and-practice (Koh, Chai, Benjamin, & Hong, 2015). This is because just having technological knowledge does not guarantee that the instructors can implement technologies into their teaching practice effectively. Lecturers need to restructure learning activities to promote critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration and knowledge construction through social learning environment (Learning Partnership for 21st Century, 2016). In the local context, this is also aligned with the aspiration of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) for blended learning model to be the main pedagogical approach in the higher educational institution as stated in the Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Hence, students will benefit from the use of technologies such as video-conferencing, live streaming, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for learning without boundaries (MOHE, 2015). To achieve teaching and learning via technology, MOHE together with the higher education institutions are working towards building the capabilities of the academic community as stated in the National e-learning Policy. According to the policy, by 2020, 75% of higher education instructors will have had knowledge on technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) and basic skills in e-learning to implement blended learning mode in teaching and learning processes (MOHE, 2015).

The policy vision can only be achieved if lecturers have the knowledge and skills that can assist them to employ technological resources in their curricular designs by planning effective teaching and meaningful learning experience for the students. The knowledge and skills are especially important to support students in overcoming the challenges that they experience in learning a particular subject. The focus of this study is writing skill, which is one of the most difficult skills while learning Mandarin. Previous studies show that writing classes tended to focus on traditional methods of memorizing and repetition techniques which lead to poor writing skills among the students (Afrin, 2016; Thomas, 2017).

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