

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.

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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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Although there are many studies on the use of collaborative tools in teaching writing skills in general (Chen, 2019; Chen & Yu, 2019,) there is a scarcity of studies on the use of collaborative learning tools for the teaching and learning of Mandarin writing skills in particular, especially studies focusing on how collaborative tools can help students in the development of content. As suggested by Yilmaz and Keser (2016), different social interaction tools have different functions and that their use in teaching and learning can have different impacts on student interaction which may facilitate the development of writing skills. Thus, it is important to examine how a collaborative tool such as Padlet affects students' learning writing skills. While there is an increasing number of studies investigating the role of Padlet in collaborative learning, there remains a paucity of studies on the use of Padlet for writing skills. This research, therefore, attempts to fill the gap by examining how Padlet can be used to strengthen students' mastery and understanding of topics and how it can help students to enhance their ability to write content.

BACKGROUND

Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL)

CSCL is also known as technology that supports collaborative learning by enhancing interaction among group members through joint activity and creation of knowledge (Koschmann, 2002; Lipponen, Rahikainen, Lallimo, & Hakkarainen, 2003; Resta & Laferriere, 2007). In other words, students can engage in meaningful learning within a CSCL environment, discussing and applying knowledge as they work together on learning tasks.

However, the rapid growth of social media and collaborative learning (CL) tools such as wikis, blogs and podcasts require different technical applications that lecturers need to learn in order to integrate CL tools in their teaching and learning. Through CSCL, learners can interact with their peers to promote meaning-making (Koschmann, 2002; Koschmann, Stahl, & Zemel, 2004; Stahl, Koschmann, & Suthers, 2006). Meaning-making happens through the process of social negotiation that promotes learners to formulate different perspectives, ideas and stance to be contributed in a group (Dillenbourg, Baker, Blaye, & O'Malley, 1996; Koschmann, 2002). Besides that, learners construct new knowledge through social negotiation that tends to foster higher phases of collaborative knowledge construction and knowledge building (De Wever, Keer, Schellens, & Valcke, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Schrire, 2006; Tang & Tan, 2017). Knowledge construction is achieved when learners create meaning for personal learning rather than receiving it directly from peers. Meanwhile, knowledge building is developed intentionally when a group of learners are collaboratively involved in meaning-making by solving, discussing and comparing ideas or problems (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2003, 2006; Suthers, 2006).

In CSCL, high quality engagement in joint activity depends on the collaboration among learners that lead to conceptual understanding because engagement mediates the relationship between motivation and learning (Tal, Krajcik, & Blumenfeld, 2006). Collaborative group engagement provides opportunities for students to work on inquiry-based practices to solve authentic problems (Sinha, Rogat, Adams-Wiggins, & Hmelo-Silver, 2015). Thus, CSCL is a component for learners to work collaboratively in joint activities through technology such as CL tools as mediation which is beyond the transmission of knowledge.

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Collaborative Learning (CL) Tools in Higher Education

In this 21st century, new opportunities and affordances for learning have arisen due to the advancement of CL tools, mobile learning, and interactive surfaces (Bishop & Elen, 2014). CL tools also can serve as a user-friendly platform that provides immediate learner response and structural levels, and values each participant's opinion (McAfee, 2006). Most of the time, CL tools are known as Web 2.0 application. This internet technology enables and promotes Web content development through social collaboration. Through Web 2.0, various information resources can be accessed promptly and globally (Biasutti, 2017; Firat & Koksall, 2017; Oliver, 2010).

Hence, from the context of higher education, CL tools could be incorporated in teaching to transform learning process to be less linear and beyond the traditional classroom setting to allow students to acquire social knowledge construction through sharing, discussing and producing various concepts in learning in a dynamic and instantaneous manner (De Wever, Van Keer, Schellens, & Valcke, 2009; Garcia, Elbeltagi, Brown, & Dungay, 2015; Lee & Markey, 2014). Examples of the CL tools include content creation (blogs, wikis, and podcasts); social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube); bookmarking (tagging and RSS feeds) and communication tools (instant messaging (IM) and discussion forum. Many CL tools do not need to be installed in any devices or require a high specification hardware (Dewitt, Alias, & Siraj, 2015). This is because almost all LMS have embedded and offer essential CL tools, such as blogs, wikis, podcast, text messaging/chat and discussion forum to organize and control learners' joint activities.

A number of studies have found that CL tools have potential to facilitate learning in online learning environments. Using CL tools, most of the activities related to education, such as reading a text and discussing it online, writing online content, creating audio and video can be carried out. CL tools are proven to be useful for learning since they are known for task-specific collaborations with goals and work-oriented activities (Cheung & Vogel, 2013; Dewitt et al., 2015). Integrating different types of CL tools in learning increases interactions among learners since it allows the students not only to be a passive user of the available tools but also to create, share, contribute and comment on the content through various file formats that can be shared or edited online and develop student-centered personalized learning environments (Cheung & Vogel, 2013; Churchill, 2011; DeWitt, Alias, & Siraj, 2014; Sigala, 2007). In their study, Yilmaz, Karaoglan Yilmaz and Kilic Cakmak (2017, p.963) found that students working in groups using Facebook as a platform, "have tendencies to test, evaluate and regulate themselves by observing the knowledge sharing and interaction behaviours". This implies that collaborative tools have the potential to promote students self-regulation in learning. This implies that lecturers in higher education need to be aware of the educational potential of CL tools and be ready to explore and implement CL tools for the benefit of students' learning through social interactions and cognitive process during collaborative learning.

The Use of ICT to Enhance Writing Skills

Writing is considered as a key principle for language production. It is also regarded as a challenging skill to be learned by students (Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016). The language production here can be English as a second language (ESL), English or Mandarin as a foreign language (E/MFL). As far as students' academic life is concerned, writing skill is considered as a vital part of communication because it allows them to express, share and transfer meaning in a well-constructed text (Afrin, 2016). One of the authors

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in his book expresses that writing is a physical and mental art where human expresses and organizes them into sentences that are comprehensible to a reader (Afrin, 2016). Therefore, this section is divided into two sub sections. First, factors that hinder student writing skills are discussed. Next, the use of CL tools to promote writing skills among students in higher education institution (HEI) is explained. According to the past literature, many students experience difficulty in linguistic skills, especially writing skills due to insufficient idea, high dependency on the first language (L1), anxiety in writing, lack of motivation and inefficient pedagogy (Afrin, 2016; Fareed et al., 2016). Besides, majority of the students who enter HEI are freshmen (Thomas, 2017). Hence, they have trouble in writing skills.

Students Writing Skills Challenges

Previous studies showed that poor writing skills resulted from two main factors: the learner and the lecturer. From the learner perspective, students face anxiety in writing because they struggle with the structural components of the language which lead to poor ideas in text composition. This situation also causes lack of confidence in students, since teaching strategies fail to address students' learning style and prior knowledge (Fareed et al., 2016; Mercer-Mapstone & Matthews, 2017). This situation is also associated with their lack of motivation when students are continuously involved in didactic learning method that focuses on rote learning and exam-oriented language production rather than promoting creative skills (Dar & Khan 2015). HEI should move away from teaching and learning process that focus on memorizing and repetition towards teaching students the essential skills such as problem solving, knowledge building and collaborative skills (Dewitt, Alias, & Siraj, 2015). It is important to create opportunities for students to identify a suitable source of information, and rephrase the selected information to be used appropriately in an academic writing context (Gonye, Mareva, Dudu, Sib, 2012). From the lecturer's perspective, students show negative attitudes towards learning writing skills because of ineffective teaching methods used by the lecturers (Fareed et al., 2016; Wang, 2015). Some examples of ineffective pedagogy include inconsistency in giving feedback to students' work and lack of engaging tasks that could motivate students (Pineteh, 2013). It is very common to see lecturers limit themselves in teaching writing skills by using paper and pencil approach which consequently limits the students from having conversation and debate before making an attempt to write (Alsamadani, 2017). In addition to that, previous studies also suggested that lecturers could transform their teaching method by integrating technology in order to improve and inculcate interest among students to improve their writing skills (Fareed et al., 2016; Graham & Perin, 2007; Wang, 2015). In order to do that, lecturers need to adopt CL tools such as wikis, blogs, Padlet, and forum discussion in their writing courses to make learning more interesting and fun. Hence, to incorporate CL tools to teach writing skills, lecturers should be well-equipped with the knowledge and skills of using CL tool to promote students' writing development.

CL Tools to Promote Writing Skills

In this twenty-first century era, teaching language took a new dimension due to the advancement of technology. In HEI, new way of learning writing skill with educational technology is needed and no longer only through practice and reinforcement (Altinmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Wang, 2015). There are many CL tools that can be integrated in lessons to help students acquire writing skills. According to previous studies, tools such as wikis offer students the room to communicate with peers by sharing, presenting and collaborate information in one document. Wikis are used for collaborative writing due

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to the free editing feature available for students to review and restructure content at any point of time (Altanopoulou, Tselios, Katsanos, Georgoutsou, & Panagiotaki, 2015; Biasutti & El-Deghaidy, 2012; Wang, 2015). Through wiki, each student could contribute to the benefit of the group when each of them works together to achieve the learning goals and objectives. Collaborative writing has a great prospective since group members could improve writing skill that focus on grammar and language accuracy from each other (Davidson, 2012; Wang, 2015).

The type of collaboration when students use CL tools should also be considered by lecturers to ensure that they produce writing of high quality. Based on Storch's (2002) study of ESL peer interaction in a face-to-face collaborative writing task environment, it is suggested that interaction patterns can be categorized into four types: 1) collaborative 2) dominant/dominant 3) dominant/passive and 4) expert/novice. The findings indicated that more learning uptake was evident when learners interact in a collaborative manner and that peer interaction patterns affected quality of writing. The patterns found to be conducive for learning and improve the quality of writing were the collaborative, and the expert/novice patterns but not the dominant /dominant or the dominant/passive type of interaction. Li and Zhu's (2017) study, which was conducted in the context of ESL learners' wiki-writing for English for academic purposes (EAP) course appears to support this conclusion. They found that the group that demonstrated collaborative pattern produced a research proposal of a higher quality and performed better in terms of coherence and rhetorical structure compared to groups that did not display a collaborative pattern.

Awareness of the role of different CL tools and how they may be used in different ways are crucial for writing stages. There are various steps involved in collaborative writing. According to Navarre (2019, p. 83), these steps may include "group forming, brainstorming ideas, coordinating meeting schedules, researching, exchanging information gathered from the research, outlining and planning the content, crafting the first draft, reviewing and editing and repeating some steps for a second/final draft". Because of this, it is important to recognize how CL tools can support collaborative writing at different stages. In their study of learners' writing in Spanish as a foreign language using ICT tools such as wikis and chats to compare learners' individual and collaborative writing, Elola and Oskoz (2010) found that different ICT tools seemed to be used in different ways by learners. Learners used chats to discuss the overall organization and sections of the essay such as the introduction, body and conclusion and to search for information to address real time concerns. Learners who used wikis were, however, more focused on linguistics aspects at the paragraph level such as coherence of sentences, grammatical structures and vocabulary use. All learners in their study also felt that collaborative writing helped to improve the overall quality of their work. Their study highlights the importance of understanding the role of specific CL tools in designing writing tasks for students.

Kessler (2009) proposed that collaborative writing using technology can promote learner autonomy. In his study of pre-service EFL teachers, Kessler (2009) found that participants can work autonomously on a long-term collaborative task using wiki. However, they appeared to be more focused on content and formatting rather than form. He found that while they were able to demonstrate the ability to work autonomously on the collaborative task, they did not show willingness to correct grammatical errors that did not appear to affect the meaning. Kessler attributed this to the informal setting of the writing task and the nature of the grammatical errors which the participants felt were not severe.

Besides wiki, blog is also another form of CL tools that facilitate students to improve their writing skills in non-traditional ways. Blogging practice allows students to express themselves through writing and attract many people to comments when their articles have been published (Alsamadani, 2017,). In HEI, learning writing skills through blogging is one of the way students socialize, debate, discuss and

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express their ideas and thoughts with peers and within large sociocultural system (Alsamadani, 2017; Chen, 2015). Besides that, students who write collaboratively were able to produce higher quality of writing than those who wrote individually because students were able to revise and improve their writing style by taking into consideration of readers' point of view (Wang, 2015). Collaboration among students can be cultivated when they receive feedback from peers and take control over the expression of the writing skills (Alsamadani, 2017; Fareed et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important for the lecturers to design learning tasks that incorporate with shared goal for meaningful learning to take place when using CL tools because wiki and blog are eventually used as medium of information sharing online but not for interaction (Dewitt et al., 2015). In the context of writing, Navarre (2019) suggested that tools such as wikis appear to be more appropriate for asynchronous editing compared to document-sharing tools that are more suitable for synchronous editing.

Lecturers need to be aware of the affordances of particular CL tools and how they can be utilized for students' specific learning needs. In this study, a CL tool, Padlet, was used to organize interactive activity for argumentative writing practices in the context of essay writing in Mandarin among undergraduates to allow them to generate new ideas and benefit from them when using this tool. The use of Padlet is an interesting way to develop writing skills it provides a platform to compile and showcase all the students' written work. As suggested by Bikowski (2015), students should be encouraged to use a variety of technologies for collaboration and that Padlet can support students' learning in a creative way. In this way students are exposed to a different method of learning writing where this would raise their awareness of the many different learning opportunities afforded by ICT. Padlet also engages learners to participate actively in learning process as it allows them to write their ideas and make amendments on their writing rather than merely listen and memorize what is taught in class. Using Padlet this way can make classroom activities more interactive, fun, and motivate students in their learning.

The Needs for Mandarin Writing Competency

Mandarin is the most widely spoken language in the world. About 1.2 billion people or around 16% of the world's population use Mandarin or Chinese language as their first language (Hao, 2020). It is also one of the five official languages of the United Nations. This informs the importance of Mandarin competency worldwide. As a matter of fact, the mainland China is one of the largest economic entities in the world, with its booming business and consumer affluence on the rise. In terms of the Malaysian-China ties, Malaysia has been China's top trading partner within ASEAN since 2008 with bilateral trade volume hitting as high as US\$108.6bil (RM443bil) from US\$96bil (RM392bil) in 2018. This makes Malaysia the top three trade partner of China in Asia (*The Star*, 19 Feb 2019). By the sheer economic and communicative values of the Mandarin language, the innovation in enhancing Mandarin writing skill could go a long way in future endeavors, especially in relation to education and business.

Generally, in the case of learning Mandarin, one of the most difficult skills is the writing skill. Some of the common problems in writing are deficiency in vocabulary choices, lack of ideas as well as poor command of the structural components of the language. These challenges lead to inability to clearly express opinions and thoughts in text composition. Commonly, every student in the classroom has different level of intellectual or cognitive strength. The good students are better in grammar and expression, therefore their writing is stronger. Weaker students need more clarifications and examples to engage with the topic. The traditional teaching approach is inadequate to address the challenges faced by students. The traditional way mainly involve the lecturer giving the topic to the students and then

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the students would write individually based on the given topic and this is followed by the lecturer's feedback on individual students' writing. This one-to-one feedback helps students discover and remedy their problems. However, it is limited as students often only see their own shortcomings, and they often feel incompetent, helpless and demotivated. Furthermore, students' may not understand the lecturer's comments, especially on how to develop the content. Also, it can be time consuming for the lecturer to comment on all aspects, from grammar to content, on all individual essays. The lecturer, on the other hand, feels frustrated and being flustered as well.

Specifically, in the case of this group of students, they faced three major problems at the start of the writing process. Firstly, they lacked understanding of the topic given. Students could not understand clearly what is required to write from the given topic. Secondly, they were unable to provide relevant contents related to the topic. The ideas were poorly expressed and their opinions were vague. The proposed opinions of pros and cons mostly could not be strongly substantiated. Thirdly, the overall structure was disorganized. There were incomplete sentences and their arguments were flawed. In view of these problems, there was a need to consider ways to support the development of these learners' argumentative writing skills.

As an alternative to the traditional teaching methods, the researchers tried to integrate Padlet in the teaching of argumentative writing. At present, research involving the use of Padlet in writing is lacking, particularly research that looks at the writing process. This research attempts to address the gap by looking at how the use of Padlet can help learners in developing their understanding of topic. In this research, Padlet was utilized to transform didactic teaching and learning of Mandarin writing skills into innovative pedagogy to create new learning experiences for Year 2 University of Malaya's undergraduates. Through the platform of Padlet, each classmate can get inspiration from other classmates' write-up. Padlet adds fun to the classroom and promotes student confidence allowing students to learn from their peers' strengths and improve on their weaknesses.

The current research was driven by these two questions: 1) How can Padlet be used to strengthen students' understanding of the topic? 2) How can Padlet be used to enhance the students' ability to write good content?

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Participants

TIC 1004 Competency Chinese Language 2 is a core course for Semester 2 year one undergraduates. In the year 2019, there were 14 undergraduates who took this class. Their first language is Mandarin. They were tasked with essay writing practices. One of them includes argumentative writing.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collected were from three writing assignments at the beginning of the semester in the academic year 2018/2019. The participants were 14 students (in a single class) from first year second semester Bachelor of Chinese Language and Linguistics program at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics. They were introduced to Padlet at the beginning of the course and in Week 3, students were tasked to use Padlet individually. In Week 8, mid-term of the semester, the students had a writing test. The final

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writing test was administered in Week 15. Three writing assessments were marked according to the rubrics as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. The rubric assessment of three test of writing assignment

分数 Marks (Grade)	评分标准 Assessment Criteria
25-30 (A)	切题、文笔佳、观点独到、题目有新意、运用指定的表达方式、结构性强 Clearly presents a main idea. Well-planned and well-thought out. Includes title, introduction, and statement of main idea, transitions and conclusion. Exceptionally well-presented and argued; ideas are detailed, well-developed, supported with specific evidence & facts, as well as examples and specific details.
20-24 (B)	切题、文笔中等、有内容、题目切题、运用指定的表达方式、颇有结构 There is A main idea supported throughout most of the paper. Good overall organization, includes the main organizational tools. Well-presented and argued; ideas are detailed, developed and supported with evidence and details, mostly specific.
15-19 (C)	略有切题、文笔平平、内容普通没新意、稍偏离指定的表达方式、结构性弱 Vague sense of a main idea, weakly supported throughout the paper. There is a sense of organization, although some of the organizational tools are used weakly or missing, Content is sound and solid; ideas are present but not particularly developed or supported; some evidence, but usually of a generalized in nature.
0-14 (D)	离题、不完整、错字多、偏离指定的表达方式、没有结构 No main idea, No sense of organization. Content is not relevant.

Remarks: The marks scored will be converted to 100% => 80, 70-79, 60-69, >50.

During the first lecture, students were introduced to Padlet and were asked to bring their laptop during class every Tuesday and Wednesday. Networked computers with Internet connectivity is required to be able to use Padlet in classroom. Padlet was used for two types of teaching and learning activities in the classroom for two hours for each class. For the first activity, students were asked to write individually, and for the second activity, students were divided into seven groups. Using Padlet, the lecturer provided the class with lesson notes, topics and guidelines of writing assignments, supplementary materials, and review selected writing samples and provided extra links that support and enhance learning. Students were asked to post their writing works or assignments periodically, and the lecturer would evaluate and post her comments on the Padlet wall. Any confusions that students felt could be resolved based on the lecturer's comments as they could immediately apply the feedback in their writing.

Students could check their friends' posts once they have shared their posts. They could easily view their classmates' writing in real time and comment on each other's post. Students were allowed to post additional writing exercises on lessons learned in the class, and make regular comments on the peer's writing task. In addition, students were encouraged to work on various activities which involved selected writing topics. Students were also given the freedom to do research on a relevant topic of interest and present the information found related to their chosen topic. Padlet was also used as a common platform of written communication among the class members.

Focus group interviews were conducted with all the 14 students in Week 14, the final week of the semester. The students were divided into three groups. The instructor conducted an interview with each group separately during the final session. The purpose of the focus group interview was to find out students' thoughts regarding Padlet. They were asked questions about their experience of using Padlet

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and how they perceived the usefulness of Padlet in learning essay writing in Chinese. Each focus group interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Data Description

The shared topics can be of varied interests, for example, a discussion of a film, articles on specific topics and related photos, and so forth as shown by Figure 1.

Figure 1. Individual writing sharing after the discussion on selected topics



As shown in Figure 1, the Padlet wall displays the writings of three different groups reflecting three different perspectives on the same topic, namely “Literature is essential for a good leadership”. The three groups of students interpreted the title and content of the article from three different perspectives. The first group wrote on how philosophical thoughts affect a leader, the second group wrote from the angle of the history of cultivation on how to rebrand a leader, and the third group wrote on the subtle influence of literature on the leader. Everyone collectively shared their ideas on the Padlet wall. After everyone uploaded their writing to this wall, the students would explain their content in their respective groups. This established the atmosphere of collaborative learning. With the use of Padlet, everyone could share their content and this encouraged students’ active involvement in their learning. Through observation, it is found that the students know their own content, but they also paid attention to the content of their classmates. This kind of attention also shows that the students were motivated in their learning as Padlet provided them with a platform to learn in a fun and interactive manner compared to the traditional lecture-based method. Padlet also enabled them to be more focused in completing their task as they concentrated on giving feedback on the writings shared by their classmates on the Padlet wall.

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Figure 2. One of the activities on individual writing using Padlet during lecture



During class, all the students would post their essays on the Padlet wall. Based on Figure 2, the parts highlighted in yellow refer to the lecturer and student comments based on the essays posted on the Padlet wall. Active discussion on the comments took place in class as students responded each other's work. It is also very important for the lecturer to give constructive feedback on the essays posted to help students with the development of their ideas. Some of the comments highlighted in Figure 2 are based on the topic 'Fake Diplomas'. The comments include: "How does the corruption of the education system affect the creation of fake diplomas?", "How does a fake diploma affect the education system of a country?" After discussion, the students were able to develop their ideas further as seen in the following examples:

"假文凭事件必然会影响到我国的教育发展。所谓“上梁不正下梁歪”我国领袖拥有假文凭事件会使得那些想要抄捷径国民更加有理由效仿之。试想,如果老师拥有假文凭,没受到专业的训练那么他可能无意间灌输错误的知识给学生,不但会影响学生的未来,还会丢失了国家的人才。[The fake diploma event will inevitably affect the development of education in our country. The idiom, "fish rot from the head down" describes this kind of leadership. If our leaders have fake diplomas, it will set the kind of bad example of those who want to cut corners. Just think, if the teacher has a fake diploma and is not trained professionally, he may inadvertently instill the wrong knowledge to the students, which will not only affect the future of the students, but also the talents of the country.]"

Students know how to quote idioms to express their thoughts and stand. Another example like:

"[对于假文凭的需求是为了得到更好的就业机会?还是在为自己所铺排的最轻松的成功之道在找借口?这其中买家和卖家都忽略了人品和诚信的重要性。前者以投机取巧为由,后者以盈利为主,才导致了这个市场的不断循环。假文凭的诱惑之大足以让人们忘了为人根本吗?]The need for a fake diploma is to get a better job opportunity? Still looking for an excuse for the easiest way to succeed for yourself? Both buyers and sellers ignore the importance of character and integrity. The former

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is based on opportunistic and the latter is based on profit, which leads to the uninterrupted cycle of this market. Is the temptation of a fake diploma enough to make people forget to be human?"

The examples above demonstrate that the students utilized questioning methods to express their thoughts and ideas. Through this Padlet wall, they could easily learn from each other, where this helps to strengthen their content writing.

Figure 3. Activities 1: Individual Writing by using Padlet during lecture



Figure 3 shows the amended version of students writing task based on the comments and discussion which took place during the activities in the classroom. During the semester, the students were assigned writing practice task based on seven essay topics. Each topic would be written on the Padlet wall. In the early stages, the lecturer would randomly choose two students to discuss the topic; one would develop ideas to support the topic and another, the counter argument. The points of both students' views would be shown on the Padlet wall. They were given 15 minutes to write their view of the topic. In these primary stages we found that majority of the students' writing were not clear whether they supported or opposed the motion. After the lecturer gave comments on the wall, pair work was carried out. This session was for everyone to brainstorm ideas related to the topic. The students were given instructions to go home to search for related information, and rewrite a complete essay on their own topic, and then upload it to a new Padlet wall created by the lecturer. An example of one of the topics is "A good network is king". Many of the students were not able to support the given topic with relevant ideas. They were able to give the content on agreeing points but not able to expand their ideas on what is involved to build a good network. They responded with short sentences on Padlet. After the discussion based on the Padlet, they went through their peers' work where some of the ideas given were clear but some were not and commented on them. The lecturer then gave comments on the students' posts on the wall of the Padlet. Based on their peers and lecturer's comments, the students developed a better understanding of each individual topic. They also got to know their weakness. Although there were instances of incomplete sentences and lack of confidence to share their idea on the Padlet wall at the beginning, based on the comments given by their peers and lecturer, they were finally able to write a better paragraph as follows:

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“[人脉即人际关系、人际网络、体现人的人缘、社会关系,通过各种渠道所达到的领域。根据辞典里的说法,人脉的解释为“经由人际关系而形成的人际脉络”,经常用于政治或商业的领域,但其实不论做什么行业,人人都会使用人脉。]... “People are interpersonal beings through interpersonal networks, human relationships, social relationships, and these are established through various mediums. According to the dictionary, the interpretation of the network is “interpersonal context formed through interpersonal relationships,” which is often used in political or commercial fields, but in fact, everyone uses the network regardless of the industry...””.

Findings

First, the focus group interview data was transcribed. This is followed by applying value coding, focusing on the participants’ attitudes and beliefs about the Padlet adopted in the course. The students soon realized that the use of Padlet for teaching and learning differed considerably from the traditional method they were accustomed to either in school or in previous foundation levels. The transcribed data was then sorted and grouped into identical categories under the keywords: (a) concentration; (b) practical; (c) impressive; (d) understand, and (e) interesting. There were different ways that the students explained their thoughts on their experience with the use of Padlet: “interesting” “helps in classroom”, “concentration”, and “impressive to me” among some of them.

“...Padlet is interesting helped me concentrated in the classroom.” (T14)

“I like to read peers’ sharing on Padlet.” (T09)

“By using Padlet for learning writing is so practical, therefore, I think I can score better marks in final exam”. (T07)

“I know Padlet that can assist me in learning Chinese Writing.” (T08)

“I think I have to learn new tool to upgrading my writing skills, Padlet is impressive to me.”(T02)

“I prefer to integrate Padlet in my presentation writing tasks, it is very practical.” (T01)

“all materials shared in Padlet are meaningful, relevant, practical....” (T12)

“lecturer using Padlet during the classroom, can help me more concentrated in learning writing” (T03)

“I like to use Padlet to learn how to share video for related writing topic ... it is good for brainstorming during classroom.” (T13)

The purposes of this research were to understand how Padlet could be used to strengthen students’ understanding of a writing topic and how Padlet could be used to enhance the students’ ability to write good content. Based on their responses, it can be summarized that the students were very interested to write essays with Padlet in the classroom and that that they liked this learning atmosphere very much. Based on their peers’ contents, they learnt to express their opinion on the different writing topics. They

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expressed their understanding of the writing structure and also learned more about the essay topic and the related arguments. From the lecturer's comment, they could recognize their mistakes and discover different opinions and ideas. Their feedback on writing through Padlet also enabled them to exercise their ability to think, about the topic from different angles, and exchanging their opinions with other students, "*I am very inspired by myself, discovering my own shortcomings and learning how to write the title.*" (T05). Most of the students felt that using Padlet is very interesting, stimulates the motivation to write, and helped them to see that different characteristics of their friends' writing can help them improve their writing skills.

During the whole semester the teaching and learning of both lecturer and students involved several steps including group forming, brainstorming ideas, researching related materials such video, newspapers cutting, in order to exchange information gathered in each Padlet. Most of the time, students would try to outlining and planning the content, crafting the first draft, reviewing and editing and repeating some steps (as stated in Navarre, 2019) for their draft. Because of this, it is important to recognize how CL tools can support collaborative writing at different stages in Chinese essay writing.

Students were tasked with three essay writing assignments throughout the semester. The first assignment was conducted in Week 3, the mid-term assignment was conducted in Week 8 and the final assignment was conducted during the final examination in Week 15. Their writings were assessed to gauge the effectiveness of Padlet integration in the classroom. Each assignment carries a 100% weightage. Results yielded are as follows in Table 2:

Table 2. Results of Students' Writing Assignment

<i>No of Student</i>	<i>Total Marks</i>	<i>First Writing (WEEK 3)</i>	<i>Midterm Writing (WEEK 8)</i>	<i>Final Writing (WEEK 15)</i>
	100	100	100	100
14	>80	(1)7.1%	(7)50%	(10)71%
	70->79	(2) 14.3%	(7)50%	(4)29%
	60->69	(11)78.6%	0	0
	>50	0	0	0

From these three writing assessments such as first assignment (conducted in Week 3), mid-term assignments (conducted in Week 8 and final assignment is during the final examination) all the students passed. Three writing tests were conducted in classroom. In the beginning, the result showed the majority of students (78.5%) were scored the lowest marks in the range marks 60-69. On the Week 8, when mid-term test was conducted, the results showed 50% of students scored in the range marks between 70 and 80. Final test indicated that almost 70% of the students scored grade A at the end of the semester. The Padlet offers a better collaboration between both lecturer and students teaching and learning experiences. It creates an experiential opportunity with which students could experiment with hands-on learning of writing argumentative essay. As suggested by Kessler (2009), a range of collaborative tasks should be provided for learners in order to find optimal conditions for particular groups of language learners and their unique needs. This positive accomplishment affirms that enjoyment and collaborative learning style can improve Mandarin writing skills.

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SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of Padlet as an interactive ICT tool requires students and lecturer to collaborate for it to be effective in the classroom. As highlighted earlier, the use of Padlet encouraged learners to refine their ideas for their essays. Learners were able to view and comment on each other's work posted on the Padlet wall. Through the activity, they learned to scaffold their peers' work and also gained a better understanding of the writing topic where this helped them to improve their writing. This finding is in line with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Alsamadani, 2017; Chen, 2015; Wang; 2015).

Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight not only the importance of collaboration between learners but also the instructor's use of an appropriate ICT tool in facilitating students' writing process. There is a need for the instructor to recognize the affordances of different ICT tools and how they can be utilized to support learners' writing development. As writing is not a linear process, it is essential to understand how technology can support the different stages of writing. In the case of this study, Padlet was used by learners to give feedback on their peers' ideas at the early stages of writing so that learners could refine their ideas for their next draft. Idea generation is an essential stage for learners to be able to write argumentative writing effectively. Padlet affords this learning opportunity through its feature where learners' writing can be displayed and viewed on a Padlet wall by students' enrolled in the class. Previous researchers found that learner collaboration can be fostered when learners received peer feedback and made use of the feedback to improve their writing (Alsamadani, 2017; Fareed et al., 2016). The instructor could use this feature of Padlet to encourage collaboration between learners when they post their ideas and comment on each other's ideas.

Other than promoting collaboration between learners, the use of Padlet in this study appeared to enhance learner motivation in writing. One of the writing challenges faced by the learners in this study was that they found it difficult to express their ideas to write an argumentative essay. However, with the use of Padlet, learners reported that they felt more motivated to write. Previous studies have shown that one of the writing challenges faced by learners include learning anxiety and low motivation (Afrin, 2016; Fareed et al., 2016). Although this study did not aim to examine their learning motivation before and after using Padlet, the findings indicated that the use of Padlet helped with their motivation. This implies that Padlet has the potential to increase learner motivation in classroom and its use for the purposes of idea generation and content development should be considered by writing instructors.

Nevertheless, as shown by the findings, the students tended to focus more on the content of their peers' writing and not so much on the structural aspects of writing such as grammar and vocabulary choice. This finding seems to be in line with the findings of Kessler's (2009) study. In his study, it was found that participants could work independently as they collaborated on a task using wiki. But their focus was predominantly on the content and less on form. Similarly, in the present study, Padlet was mainly used by the students to address writing issues related to content. This implies that although Padlet is useful to support peer collaboration, students would also need to be guided by the instructor to comment on the structural aspects of writing and not just on content alone. It is also acknowledged that even though Padlet also could be used to encourage students to be less dependent on the instructor to provide them with feedback, it is also important for the instructor to raise their awareness of the different aspects of writing that could be improved. The instructor could perhaps first demonstrate the aspects of writing to be commented on based on a writing sample before getting learners to comment on their peers' writing. This demonstration by the instructor could perhaps be done at different stages of writing, from idea generation to the final draft.

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To implement the suggestions recommended in this section it is important that good network connectivity is established to enable sustained use. In addition, a limitation of using Padlet is that a monthly fee is needed for using Padlet, which could become a burden for the lecturer. Faculty supports at the macro level in ensuring good network connection and providing appropriate ICT tools and facilities are important to encourage instructors to use ICT tools such as Padlet to promote collaborative learning and enhance teaching in the classroom.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

For future research directions, it is suggested that more research focusing on the role of collaborative tools on the enhancement of grammar and syntax in writing is needed given their importance in the accuracy of writing and in language learning. Also, since this research involved a small number of participants, a qualitative approach was adopted, where this included interviews with the instructor and students in focus groups. Future research could consider employing quantitative research methods such as questionnaires survey. This could be used to examine the students' learning style, characteristics, and their achievements while comparing feedback methods to promote a more comprehensive understanding of Mandarin writing research. In addition, carefully controlled experiments could also be conducted, investigating variables such as student performance in writing, anxiety in writing, and motivation in writing before and after the use of Padlet.

CONCLUSION

This research is an initial attempt to apply Padlet in the teaching of essay writing, or more specifically, argumentative writing. The lecturer used Padlet for the first time with the students, and it was found that they made improvements in their writing. The Padlet wall is a good sharing platform and plays a very important role in the classroom. It supports the development of various skills needed for students to write an effective argumentative writing and engages them in their learning. The students in this study were able to express their thoughts on the topics based on their readings and receive comments on them. Although the topics given are considered challenging for these students and they struggled to produce appropriate content in the early stages, they were able to develop their writing skills through active collaboration using Padlet. Synchronous interaction was promoted between lecturers and students as they focused on common writing concerns. The feedback received through Padlet helped the students to overcome the problems of generating content and to apply critical thinking skills to support their arguments in a more structured way. Nevertheless, for successful implementation of innovation, the instructor's leadership and guidance are critical. The instructor will need to know how to use the tool and design appropriate activities that can promote students' learning. It is also important for instructors to know the technical requirements needed. As the saying goes, "workers must first sharpen their tools".

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Collaborative Learning: Learning that occurs when two or more students learn something together towards achieving common learning goals.

Collaborative Teaching: A form of innovative pedagogical approach where Educator/ Lecturer/ Instructor design learning tasks and instructional materials based on collaborative learning tools such as Blog, Padlet, Podcast, Forum Discussion and so forth to support students' learning from one another.

Mandarin Language: Mandarin is spoken in Mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore. The current trend is that Mandarin has become the standard and common language of the Chinese language and is becoming more and more widely spoken internationally.

Padlet: An online interactive wall used for maintaining interactions and communication for collaborative learning.

Writing Skills: Writing is an essential competency of language. Good writing skills are needed for all the students in order to accomplish their educational and employable requirements. This research referred to argumentative essay writing in Mandarin.