

Digital learning with Canva: a technological approach to enhance English writing skills

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Abstract

This systematic literature review investigates the role of Canva as a digital learning platform in improving English writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Articles published between 2019 and 2025 were identified by searching Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, and institutional repositories using keywords related to Canva, digital media, and writing education. After a thorough screening process, 24 peer-reviewed articles were selected for investigation. The findings suggest that Canva improves students' writing skills by improving concept structure, creativity, motivation, and engagement through its visual templates and user-friendly interface. Canva also helps with essential stages of the writing process, such as brainstorming, drafting, rewriting, and presenting written work. However, obstacles persist, including unreliable internet connectivity, restricted capabilities in the free edition, and variable levels of digital readiness among teachers. Overall, the evaluation emphasizes Canva's potential as an excellent instructional tool that aligns with Education 4.0 and 21st-century learning principles. To maximize its influence on EFL writing instruction, adequate infrastructure support and rigorous teacher training are needed.

Keywords: EFL learners; digital learning; Canva; writing skills; literature review

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, technology has become an important concern in various fields, including education. In most countries, technology has become a fast and appropriate way to transfer knowledge (Elsa & Anwar, 2021). One example is learning English, a foreign language in Indonesia. Technology is very helpful in providing learning resources. The use of technology in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) continues to increase, as various learning objectives require a variety of resources. For example, teaching writing skills entails using various tools to improve certain aspects of writing (Hadi et al., 2021). Writing is one of the most important and effective skills, especially for English language learners. It helps to sharpen grammar, expand vocabulary, and foster critical thinking. Teaching writing stresses practice and revision to help students improve constantly (Zirak et al., 2022). Technology, especially visual technology, greatly helps in teaching and learning English writing skills. Canva is a digital-based visual tool that offers stunning designs through templates, features, and categories. Its different and interesting designs facilitate learning and keep the process entertaining. Teachers can utilize the Canva program to teach students knowledge, creativity, and abilities that can be applied in numerous areas of their lives (Fitria, 2022). Canva is one of the most popular choices for creating or designing anything with various features. It also uses a drag-and-drop format and provides easy-to-use access to photos, vector images, graphics, and fonts (Jumami, 2021). Those features help learners express their creativity in writing by using a wide range of templates. The study finds that Canva, as a technical medium in the twenty-first century, can help students improve the quality of their writing (Nurhidayanti et al., 2023).

Building upon this background, the present study aims to explore the use of Canva in learning English writing by identifying both its advantages and the challenges faced in its implementation, as reflected in the reviewed literature. Specifically, the study focuses on examining how Canva is applied in the teaching and learning of English writing skills and what obstacles may arise during the process.

Furthermore, in the global educational landscape, the emergence of Education 4.0 has emphasized the integration of digital technologies to promote flexible, collaborative, and student-centered learning environments aligned with 21st-century skills. While a growing body of research has examined the use of digital tools in EFL instruction, studies focusing specifically on Canva have largely emphasized students' motivation, engagement, and visual creativity rather than providing a comprehensive synthesis of its role in developing writing skills. For instance, Rahayu and Hastini (2025) reported that the use of Canva significantly enhanced students' writing motivation and engagement by fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and encouraging active participation in the writing process. However, despite these positive findings, existing studies remain fragmented and predominantly empirical, with limited attention given to systematically reviewing the pedagogical benefits and challenges of Canva for EFL writing instruction, particularly in the Indonesian context. This gap highlights the need for a focused literature review that examines how Canva is utilized as a writing-support tool, the advantages it offers, the challenges encountered in its implementation, and its alignment with Education 4.0 and 21st-century learning principles.

Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What benefits does Canva offer in teaching and learning English writing skills in EFL contexts?

RQ2: What challenges are reported in the implementation of Canva for writing instruction?

RQ3: How does Canva support 21st-century learning and Education 4.0 principles in writing pedagogy?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Technology in Language Learning

TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning) involves using digital technologies in language education as tools, delivery methods, and means to support different learners and facilitate online communication (Ugli, 2024; Zainuddin, 2023). New technology has changed language teaching, making EFL learning more flexible, interactive, and student-centered. These tools give students access to real-world content, boost motivation, and help them communicate, thereby improving learning, especially in writing (Novawan et al., 2024). In EFL writing classes, TELL offers multimedia and interactive activities that help students work independently and build writing skills. Still, there is debate about TELL's effectiveness and how best to use it in EFL writing, so more research is needed.

Writing is considered a three-step process in technology-enhanced learning: pre-writing, drafting, and post-writing. Research indicates that effective training necessitates precise tactics, focused language development, and sustained assistance at every step (Amalia et al., 2021). Studies also discover that the process writing approach enhances writing quality and reduces students' anxiety when strategies such as idea creation, revision, and proofreading are applied (Kurniasih et al., 2020). This approach has a significant impact on writing outcomes (Resmini et al., 2024). These findings underline the importance of ongoing support in EFL writing teaching and suggest that technology-enhanced environments might help students advance throughout the writing process.

2.2 Digital Tools for Teaching Writing

In current education, traditional instructional media are increasingly combined with technology to foster innovative and interactive learning environments. The use of digital technologies is widely acknowledged as a successful strategy to increasing student motivation and engagement, particularly in English writing teaching, which remains one of the most difficult language skills to master in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Previous research demonstrates that technology-enhanced learning environments offer dynamic experiences that positively impact students' motivation, participation, and writing performance (Bachtiar et al., 2024; Putri & Aminatun, 2021).

Recent studies show that digital tools can improve the teaching of English writing. Canva works on computers and mobile devices, letting users create and share visual materials. Because it is easy to access and supports many languages, Canva is especially useful for teaching writing, such as planning and organizing ideas visually (Utami & Djamdjuri, 2021). Along with Canva, Kahoot is a popular game-based learning tool that uses interactive quizzes and multimedia to boost students' motivation and

participation in writing activities (Amalia et al., 2022). Google Classroom is a virtual learning management system that helps teachers share, collect, and assess writing tasks, making it easier for teachers and students to communicate and interact from anywhere (Syahrudin et al., 2022). Coggle, an online mind-mapping tool, helps students generate ideas, organize information, and understand text structure. This allows them to focus more on writing itself without being distracted by complex technology (Handayani et al., 2025).

According to the studies reviewed, digital technologies improve the efficiency of English writing teaching by boosting student involvement, motivation, and organization. The study also shows that visual digital platforms and mind-mapping tools are especially useful for EFL learners who struggle with writing. Together, these findings lay a solid framework for future study on the use of digital technologies in EFL writing education.

2.3 Canva in Educational Contexts

Canva is an online visual design platform that uses a drag-and-drop interface and offers an extensive collection of fonts, images, shapes, icons, and other visual elements. It is widely used to create both print and digital media, such as presentations, documents, posters, and other visual content (Irwanita et al., 2023). Canva is accessible on mobile phones, laptops, and internet-connected computers. While it provides a choice of design templates, users are not restricted to specific formats. They can freely alter their designs, showing creativity and presenting their work graphically in line with their tastes (Noviyanti et al., 2023).

Canva is accessible in learning environments through both the web and mobile devices, helping students to access materials whenever and wherever they need them. Its basic style and customization features make it appropriate for teaching, especially for visual planning and idea organizing (Arifin et al., 2024). Teachers can use Canva to create interesting handouts that help pupils understand complicated concepts. Students can also use it to make creative presentations, finish assignments, and work on different projects. With its extensive template and design tools, Canva helps students organize and share information, build graphic design skills, and enjoy a more interactive learning experience (Hafidzin et al., 2025).

Additionally, Canva for Education provides free access to educational templates, interactive design elements, collaborative tools, and LMS integration. These characteristics simplify the instructional design process while also supporting student motivation and learning effectiveness, making Canva a viable digital tool in today's educational situations (Muhajir et al., 2024).

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a systematic literature review to examine available academic materials, both published and unpublished. The theoretical framework is based on a literature review methodology (Snyder, 2019). This method was selected to bring together existing theories and research on learning media, particularly Canva, and their impact on English writing skills. Data was collected by reviewing books and online scientific articles about learning media and English writing skills. For data analysis, a structured process was used to extract, organize, and present relevant theories and findings to draw meaningful conclusions (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023).

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

This systematic literature review drew on data from many scholarly databases and digital archives. The main sources were Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, and institutional repositories, which included both published and unpublished materials. These resources were chosen to provide a wide spectrum of research on utilizing Canva as a learning tool and its impact on English writing skills. The review focused on publications published between [2019] and [2025] to verify that the findings were relevant.

The search used Boolean operators like AND and OR, along with specific keywords. Common search terms were "Canva," "digital learning tool," "multimedia learning," and writing topics such as "English writing," "writing skills," and "writing proficiency." To get more results, synonyms and different spellings were also used. The search was broadened through browsing into the reference lists of major papers to locate additional relevant studies. Every step, including the databases and dates, was

recorded to maintain a transparent, reproducible process, using best practices for systematic literature reviews. (Snyder, 2019).

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria were adapted from recent methodological recommendations for systematic literature reviews in education, particularly those proposed by Lindín et al. (2023), which emphasize transparent selection processes and the use of reliable sources. The selected studies met the following criteria:

1. Published between 2019 and 2025
2. Available in full-text format
3. Written in English or Indonesian
4. Focused on digital learning media, Canva, or writing instruction

Studies that did not meet these criteria, such as opinion papers, non-academic sources, or articles unrelated to writing instruction, were excluded.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria Type	Criteria
Inclusion Criteria	Published between 2019 and 2025
	Available in full-text format
	Written in English or Indonesian
	Focused on digital learning media, Canva, or writing instruction
Exclusion Criteria	Opinion papers
	Non-academic sources
	Articles unrelated to writing instruction

3.4 Data Extraction and Analysis

The data extraction process involved:

1. Eliminating duplicates from the initial search results.
2. Screening articles by title, abstract, and full text according to inclusion/exclusion criteria.
3. Charting relevant information into a review matrix, including author, year, participants, methodology, intervention, and key findings.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic synthesis, which included:

1. Coding: Identifying and labelling relevant findings from each study.
2. Categorization: Grouping similar codes into broader themes.
3. Synthesis: Analyzing themes to identify patterns, relationships, and insights.

Thematic analysis resulted in three main categories:

1. Canva's benefits: advantages of using Canva in EFL writing.
2. Implementation issues: challenges or limitations in applying Canva.
3. Writing instruction pedagogy: strategies for integrating Canva into teaching writing.

Only peer-reviewed and reputable sources were included to ensure validity and reliability, and all data were cross-checked to maintain consistency.

3.5 PRISMA Framework

The study selection followed a structured approach inspired by the PRISMA framework. The flow of article selection is summarized below:

Table 2. PRISMA Flowchart

PRISMA Flow Stage	Number of Articles	Description
Identification	79	Articles retrieved from Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, and Institutional repositories using defined keywords
Duplicates Removed	11	Number of duplicate records removed
Screening (Title and Abstract)	68	Records screened after duplicates removed

Records Excluded	26	Irrelevant studies based on the title and abstract
Eligibility (Full-Text Assessment)	42	Irrelevant studies based on the title and abstract
Excluded (Full-Text)	24	Articles excluded due to irrelevance, lack of empirical data, or inaccessible full text
Included in Review	18	Final number of studies included for detailed analysis

After removing duplicate records, 68 articles were screened based on titles and abstracts. Of these, 26 were excluded as irrelevant, leaving 42 articles assessed for full-text eligibility. Finally, 18 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the review.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Characteristics of Reviewed Articles

This review examined 18 empirical studies published from 2019 to 2025 that explored how Canva was used to teach writing at educational levels ranging from elementary schools to universities in Indonesia. Most studies were conducted in secondary and higher education, especially in senior high schools, vocational schools (SMK), and universities. Most researchers used qualitative methods, such as case studies and descriptive analysis. Fewer studies used quantitative, quasi-experimental, mixed-method, or experimental designs.

In conclusion, Canva was mainly used as a digital writing and design tool to help students draft, organize ideas, present texts, and create multimodal work. Most studies found that Canva improved students' engagement, creativity, and writing skills, though some challenges with using the tool were also noted.

Table 3. Overview of Selected Studies on Canva for Writing Instruction in Indonesian Educational Contexts (2019–2025)

Author & Year	Participants / Context	Methodology	Intervention / Tool	Key Findings
Yundayani, Susilawati & Chairunnisa, 2019	EFL students (Indonesia)	Qualitative	Visual media	Visual media enhances creativity and self-expression
Pelangi, 2020	Senior High School students (Indonesia)	Development research	Canva Application	Canva Application as language learning media
Hadi, Izzah & Paulia, 2021	Islamic Junior High School students (Indonesia)	Quantitative (pre-experimental)	Canva Application	The effectiveness of Canva in improving writing skills
Pentury & Anggraeni, 2022	University students (Indonesia)	Qualitative-descriptive	Canva Application	Empowering 21st-century skills in writing through Canva
Herlinawati, 2023	Secondary school students (Indonesia)	Case study	Canva	Challenges: unstable internet, limited free features
Noviyanti et al., 2023	High school students (Indonesia)	Mixed-method	Canva	Engagement and enjoyment increase using Canva
Nurhidayanti et al., 2023	University students (Indonesia)	Quantitative	Canva	Canva supports multimodal writing
Priyatna, Suwastini, & Dantes, 2023	College students (Indonesia)	Qualitative	Canva Application	The Effectiveness of Canva in Writing Class
Amanda et al., 2024	College students (Indonesia)	Experimental	Canva	Canva improves drafting and presentation skills
Rini & Ripai, 2024	SMK students (Indonesia)	Quantitative	Canva for expository texts	Canva increased interest and text quality.
Pratiwi et al., 2024	Teachers in Indonesia	Survey	Digital tools	Teachers' readiness and digital literacy affect implementation

Widiarti, 2024	EFL learners	Survey	Canva	Automatic saving and editing features aid writing process
Wintarsih & Zahra, 2024	Junior high students (Indonesia)	Quasi-experimental	Canva application	Canva more effective than traditional method.
Dinanti, Fadhilawati & Fauzi, 2025	Vocational school students (Indonesia)	Qualitative case study	Canva for factual reports	Canva supported report writing; challenges addressed through scaffolding.
Junardi, Sulfasyah & Ratnawati, 2025	Grade V elementary students (Indonesia)	Quantitative / Mixed	Canva-based digital materials	Increased advertising text writing ability.
Manalu et al., 2025	Eleventh-grade SMA students (Indonesia)	Quantitative	Canva in scientific article writing	Canva influenced writing ability positively.
Trisnani, Tahrur & Yukamana, 2025	Vocational students (Indonesia)	Classroom Action Research	Canva application	Canva improved writing skills in procedure texts.
Ulfayati et al., 2025	Education context (Indonesia)	Development research	Canva-based teaching materials	Canva materials enhance writing/communication.

4.1.2 Synthesis of Findings

A study of the literature consistently shows that Canva improves writing education by encouraging multimodal text output and increasing student engagement, motivation, and originality. Students can better organize their ideas and focus on content creation rather than technical formatting thanks to Canva's visual components, pre-made templates, and user-friendly interface. These positive outcomes were observed across all educational levels, demonstrating that Canva can be used in a variety of writing contexts (Amanda et al., 2024; Noviyanti et al., 2023; Nurhidayanti et al., 2023).

Considering these positive effects, several studies highlight difficulties with using Canva in educational environments. Particularly in school settings with limited resources, reports of technological problems, including erratic internet connectivity and restrictions on the free version, were common (Herlinawati, 2023). Additionally, since teachers' capacity to pedagogically incorporate digital resources influences learning outcomes, teacher preparedness and digital literacy are significant factors in determining the efficacy of Canva-based instruction (Pratiwi et al., 2024). It is noteworthy that most studies addressed these issues descriptively, paying little attention to instructional methodologies.

According to the review, Canva supports instructional strategies that help students develop 21st-century abilities, employ multimodal learning, and adhere to constructivist principles. Canva allows students to work independently on writing assignments, be creative, and expand their knowledge by combining text and images. However, these advantages rely less on the tool itself and more on how classes are created and supported by the school.

From an analytical perspective, surveys, short-term classroom interventions with rather small sample sizes, and qualitative approaches predominated in the examined studies. Although the results regularly show favorable attitudes and results, there are still few long-term studies and strong experimental designs. Stronger empirical research is therefore required to establish causal links and long-term outcomes, even though the work currently in publication shows Canva's promise for writing education.

4.2 Discussion

This discussion interprets the synthesized findings in relation to the three research questions and situates them within relevant theories of teaching writing skills, technology-enhanced language learning, and 21st-century education.

4.2.1 Benefits of Canva in Teaching and Learning Writing Skills (RQ1)

The results of the study showed that Canva had a significant positive impact on teaching and learning writing skills, particularly by increasing student engagement, creativity, and the effectiveness of the writing process. The studies reviewed show that Canva helps by generating ideas, organizing writing, drafting, and presenting, through various interesting visual tools such as templates, graphics,

and layout options. These features help students format and design their writing, so they can focus more on developing their ideas and building the meaning of their writing.

The results of this study also support multimodal learning theory, which states that learning is enhanced when multiple forms, such as text, images, and digital elements, are used together in a more meaningful way. Canva allows students to create work that combines words and visuals. Canva also helps them engage deeper and understand what they are learning. These results are also in line with constructivist learning, in which students construct knowledge using digital tools rather than simply receiving information. Canva is not only a presentation tool but also a learning space that supports student-centered creative writing in EFL classrooms.

4.2.2 Challenges in Implementing Canva (RQ2)

Canva has significant potential for language acquisition, but using it in writing workshops has drawbacks. It can be challenging to use Canva freely in the classroom due to like unstable internet access and restricted premium features, which are often highlighted in studies. These problems are especially common in schools with lack of resources, which highlights how widespread digital inequality is in technology-based education.

Teacher readiness and digital skills also pose significant challenges. Canva will be most effective in writing instruction when teachers know how to use it to provide meaningful writing assignments to students. Without adequate training and support, teachers may use Canva to supplement lessons or presentations rather than to help students develop their writing skills. This demonstrates why professional development must also include technical skills and teaching strategies for using technology in writing classes.

4.2.3 Canva and 21st-Century Learning or Education 4.0 (RQ3)

The findings show that Canva aligns with the main ideas of 21st-century learning and Education 4.0, which focus on creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and digital skills. Canva helps students work together on writing projects and use shared digital spaces, making it easier for them to interact and give each other feedback as they write. These activities help build communication skills and support social learning, both of which are important in recent language learning.

Besides that, Canva also helps students to draft, revise, and improve their writing independently. Its flexible features let students try out different ways to express themselves and take more control of their learning. Because of this, Canva is not just a tool for better writing, but also helps students build skills they can use in school, at work, and online.

4.2.4 Implications and Future Research

This review suggests several future studies and more in-depth educational practices. Canva can be used as a supplemental writing learning tool in the classroom, particularly for assignments that emphasize creativity, collaboration, and the use of various media. While Canva's effectiveness is undeniable, careful organization, adequate student support, and alignment with learning objectives are essential for effective learning and maximum outcomes.

For future research, studies should use stronger methods, such as experiments or long-term tracking, to better demonstrate how Canva affects writing skills. Comparing Canva with other digital writing tools could also help us understand how well it works. More research is also needed to look at the results and how teachers support students when using Canva for writing.

To get the most out of Canva in EFL writing classes, schools, and policymakers should focus on better digital infrastructure, fair access to technology, and ongoing teacher training.

5. Conclusion

The literature shows that Canva is a useful online tool for teaching and learning English writing, especially for students learning English as a foreign language. Many students find writing both important and challenging, and Canva's visual and interactive features help them. By letting students organize their ideas, use different media, and be creative, Canva helps improve students' motivation, increase learning engagement, and make writing and learning more dynamic.

However, some challenges can make it hard to use Canva in English writing classes. These include limits in the free version, unreliable internet, and differences in teachers' eagerness to use

technology. To overcome these problems, schools need better digital infrastructure, support for teaching methods, and teachers' training, particularly in technological competence.

In summary, this review shows that Canva can be a helpful tool for teaching writing to EFL students. It also points out that using technology well in the classroom requires careful planning. Future research and teaching should consider not just what digital tools can do, but also the teaching methods and classroom situations that affect how well they work.

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