

Powtoon as Digital Learning Media in Academic Writing Class: Students' Perspective and Challenges

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Academic Writing, Digital Learning Media, Perspective, Powtoon</p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v8i2.1552</p> <p>How to cite: Indriani, L., Ekaningrum, R. E., & Rahardi, P. (2023). Powtoon as Digital Learning Media in Academic Writing Class: Students' Perspective and Challenges. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 8(2), 185-198</p>	<p>Facing the post-Covid-19 pandemic, teachers need to enhance technology in their teaching and learning process, especially in delivering the materials for the students. As digital natives, students are familiar with technology, and it makes them excited in learning English materials. Academic writing materials are complex because it involves expressing ideas carefully elaborated, and well-supported, logically sequenced, rigorously reasoned, and tightly stitched together. Powtoon is one of the solutions to make the materials more interesting and understandable for the students in academic writing class. This study aims to know the students' perspectives and challenges about the use of Powtoon as digital learning media to improve writing skills. The subjects are 37 students in English Department in one of the state universities in Indonesia. The method is qualitative by using questionnaire, interview, and documentation. It is found that the students have positive perceptions (76.92%) on the use of Powtoon as digital learning media to improve writing skills. Hence, Powtoon is recommended as digital learning media to improve the students' writing skills. However, the motion of the animation could distract student's concentration in understanding the materials. Apart from that, students still need to ask directly to the teacher if they have not really understood about the materials presented using Powtoon.</p>

1. Introduction

In this post Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesian EFL teachers incorporate technology for reaching their students and engaging them in blended learning classroom. Because of the differences in the characteristics of today's students, it is quite inappropriate for teachers to apply old teaching and learning methods. They are young people who were raised with constant access

to digital information because they were born in the digital era (Dingli & Seychell, 2015). To compensate for this, teachers can use learning models that take advantage of the use of technology in their applications. The hybrid learning model, often known as blended learning, combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning (Dziuban et al., 2018). However, teachers need to be familiar with and employ the proper teaching and learning resources to make teaching and learning English effective and enjoyable. Online media is one of the keys to effective teaching and learning in blended learning courses. As said by Nuriyansyah (2020) in Mahrani et al., (2022), online learning media is very important because it has an effect on how effective students' understanding of the material presented is. This is because online learning media can be used anytime, anywhere, depending on the students' needs while studying (Halima, 2020 in Mahrani et al., 2022). There are many types of online learning media, one of which focuses on making animated videos. According to Adnyani et al. (2020), video animation or animated presentations enhance the quality of the material and aid students in understanding it. Hence, online media that utilises animated videos or animated presentations can be an alternative solution to overcome teaching challenges in the current era.

Powtoon is one of the educational media that can aid in the teaching and learning process. This online software provides animated video and sound and operates similarly to PowerPoint or Canva. It has many features such as animation tools, text choices, clip art, and sound (Sutisna et al., 2019). The teacher can use Powtoon easily because it is like PowerPoint which the slides can move one by one (Pais et al., 2017). The resulting video created can be uploaded to YouTube and students can access it easily or even download it. This animated video is a quick and appealing media for delivering material to students. It is because students like to watch quick interactive videos rather than learning with the classic method. Moreover, animated video is a type of audio-visual media that has many fans of various ages (Styowati & Utami, 2022). Hence, Powtoon can foster students' engagement, motivation and performance in language learning (Oktaviani & Mandasari, 2020). Hence, Powtoon is a good solution since a teacher must be creative and innovative in selecting learning media that are suitable for teaching materials so that learning objectives can be achieved (Mangelep, 2017). According to Ikhbal and Musril (2020), the more concrete material that students are taught and experienced, the more successful learning will be. The participation of the media in the learning process is also anticipated to have an impact on students' willingness to study. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the suitability of using Powtoon as a learning medium. Thus, it explores how English language learners perceived Powtoon and what challenges they faced during the implementation of the medium.

Perspective can support individuals to understand and improve their reluctant knowledge (Rony, 2021). There are three kinds of perspectives: behavioural, cognitive and constructivism (Sirate & Yaumi, 2017). Behavioural perspective is observed and explained from direct observation and affected by the environment. Cognitive perspective is focused on how the individual organises the mental (knowledge, beliefs, skills, hopes and other mechanisms in mind) and processes the information from the environment. The constructivism perspective is focused on the knowledge that individuals get from the experiences with others in the real world. Therefore, it is hoped that this study of students' perspectives can be a bridge to share what students really experience and know after they have experienced the application of Powtoon as a learning medium in their classes. This is because it is crucial for teachers to pay

attention to students' views and preferences (DeMink-Carthew & Olofson, 2020). Nevertheless, students should also have a voice regarding their studies (Hira & Anderson, 2021). Therefore, the results of this student perspective study can later become a guideline for teachers and students to assess the suitability of Powtoon as a learning medium that is adapted to the conditions of their class.

Academic writing is one of the skills that students should be able to acquire when learning a language. This skill is related to writing for academic purposes. Concepts must be expressed in academic writing, and these concepts must also be carefully developed, solidly supported, logically ordered, rigorously reasoned, and firmly stitched together. Elements of academic writing are thesis statements, paragraphs, topic sentences, a clear and limited focus, as well as a logical structure. The focus is on the research questions which need to be defined and explained logically from the very beginning, elaborate, analyse and explain in the academic paper (Markovic, 2022). There are some problems which are faced by the students in Academic Writing class. They include plagiarism, grammatical errors, lexical difficulties and lack of planning (Khadijah, 2020). To assist teachers in overcoming these difficulties is to present the material presented using interesting animated media, namely Powtoon. Through Powtoon, teachers can more easily grab their students so they can be interested in paying attention to the material provided in an interactive and eye-catching manner. This also affects the level of student boredom later. If students are increasingly interested in the material presented, they will be focused on what they are learning and boredom can be avoided. However, to determine the appropriateness of Powtoon as a learning medium in language learning, especially academic writing class, the objectives of the research are: (1) To explore the students' perspective about the use of Powtoon as digital learning media to improve writing skills; and (2) To examine the challenges that students face in the use of Powtoon as digital learning media to improve writing skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Powtoon

Powtoon is a software application that can be downloaded on a smartphone or accessed via the web on a PC. According to Deliviana (2017), Powtoon is an application that is connected to the internet and then the material can be presented in the form of videos containing animations that are interesting for students. This IT-based web application can be used as a learning medium in which offers interesting features, such as making presentations or animated videos that can be used easily and attractively (Ernalida 2018 in Anggita, 2021). Therefore, teachers who want to develop learning media in the form of animated videos or presentations but are not skilled at editing may find Powtoon to be an effective solution. This is because Powtoon basically has a straightforward menu that makes it easy to use. The attractiveness of this application includes the practicality of its use, the diversity of templates, backgrounds, animated content, fonts and transition effects, as well as the practicality of storing its creations (Marlena et al., 2018). Moreover, Powtoon can also be accessed for free. Nevertheless, there are several templates or menus that can only be accessed when the user has paid to subscribe to Powtoon Pro. Through this application, teachers can edit animated learning media, present it to students or download the design results first. In addition, this application is very useful for explaining material that students find difficult to understand. It

is because Powtoon can be a substitute for videos or presentations with monotonous themes which may cause students to get bored and less enthusiastic about what the material.

2.2 Digital Learning Media

Digital learning media combines methods for conveying teacher material while utilising digital technology. Mahrani et al. (2022) stated that as a physical and communicative instrument designed to transmit knowledge and enhance learning quality, digital learning media is a messenger technology that may be utilised for educational purposes. Similarly, Husein (2021) described digital learning media as instructional tools that utilise digital data that can be accessed, processed, and delivered via digital devices. The usage of digital learning media is very much in accordance with the abilities that students, who are 21st-century digital natives, need. In order to use technology to their advantage in their daily lives, students must be knowledgeable and skillful users. Digital learning media will, therefore always be used to promote learning. Moreover, a further new method and a requirement for the millennium period is the utilisation of digital learning media in the teaching and learning processes (Sutisna et al., 2019). This is proven by the rise of digital media which has been developed a lot and has helped teachers teach in class, such as Powtoon. Powtoon meets the criteria of being a digital learning media because Powtoon is a digital application that can be accessed online by its users, including teachers who use it as a learning media.

2.3 Academic Writing

As a language learner, there are at least four primary skills that must be mastered, one of which is writing skills. According to Said (2018), writing is a crucial skill for the acquisition of the English language because vocabulary and grammar can be enhanced through effective writing. Therefore, it is not surprising that in Indonesia, where English is considered a foreign language, this writing skill continues to be taught at the elementary school level and even at universities. This is because writing also enhances students' learning and understanding (Kafryawan, 2020). One of the courses that bridges university-level students to deepen their writing skills is the Academic Writing course. In this course, students will be taught and equipped with academic writing skills. In an academic society, academic writing is regarded as a convention of writing style since it requires a particular written communication style to convey the writer's thoughts, opinions, or arguments in a clear, succinct, and understandable writing structure (Joshi et al., 2022). McCarthy (1987) asserts that a writer's academic writing skills are a reflection of their capacity for formulating and delivering writing ideas in a cogent manner as well as clear sentences with connections.

Therefore, academic writing skills are very important skills because not only will students learn to write for academic purposes, but these skills will be useful when they work later. In this regard, the academic writing course presents a lot of materials that students need to understand. It is understandable why so many students feel overwhelmed by this course given that academic writing in EFL is generally considered difficult for university students (Teng et al., 2018). Therefore, lecturers must provide innovation and alternative solutions in teaching their students about these academic writing skills. In connection with this digital era, the most appropriate solution is to provide digital-based learning media or digital learning media. At one of the state universities in Indonesia where the authors of this paper conducted their research, the digital learning media used by academic writing lecturers is Powtoon. Based on our initial observations, most lecturers believe that Powtoon can help them provide material that can attract the attention of their students. Not only helping students

concentrate more on material through Powtoon, Powtoon also provides opportunities for lecturers to channel their creativity. However, students' actual perspectives on the use of Powtoon in the Academic Writing course have not been investigated. This is the gap that needs to be answered by this study.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study applied a qualitative research design because it highlights the participant's understanding of social events from the human perspective. According to Cresswell & Guetterman (2019), a qualitative research design explores the phenomenon from participants' perspectives.

3.2 Participants

The subject of the study is 37 English Department students from one of the state universities in Indonesia. The participants were selected purposively, namely by selecting students who had passed the Academic Writing course which implemented Powtoon as learning media in their learning process in the classroom.

3.3 Instruments

The data are gathered by using questionnaire, interview, and documentation. The questionnaire was made using closed-ended questions adapted from Mita et al. (2022), and the answers using a Likert scale for the closed-ended questions. The option was strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. This 5-Points Likert scale has been recommended by researchers since it would lower the level of patient respondents' irritability, raise response rates and response quality (Sachdev & Verma, 2004). The questionnaire was distributed after the fourteenth meeting in a blended learning environment. The students are asked thirteen questions about using Powtoon as digital learning media in Academic Writing class. Then, the result is calculated to answer the research questions.

Table 1: Questionnaire Specification

Aspect	Number of Items
Students' perspective of the impact of animated video from Powtoon	1,2,3,4,13
Students' perspective of the animated video from Powtoon	5,7,8,
Students' perspective of the features used in the animated video from Powtoon	6,9,10,11,12

To score the results of the questionnaire, the scales are given score as follows:

Table 2: Rating Scale

Positive Statements		Negative Statements	
Alternative Answers	Score	Alternative Answers	Score
Strongly agree	5	Strongly agree	5
Agree	4	Agree	4
Neutral	3	Neutral	3
Disagree	2	Disagree	2

(Best & Kahn, 2006)

The interview was used to understand more about the students' perspectives and support the answer from the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview is conducted online by using WhatsApp. The questions are:

- (1) What are the benefits of using Powtoon as digital learning media in Academic Writing class? Please explain briefly and clearly.
- (2) What are the challenges of using Powtoon as digital learning media in Academic Writing class? Please explain briefly and clearly.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

To analyse the data from the questionnaire, the data are tabulated from the letter into numbers. To calculate the percentage of students' answers to the questionnaire is used:

$$P = \frac{\sum x}{\sum x_1} \times 100\%$$

Descriptions:

P = Percentage

$\sum x$ = Total number of respondents' answer scores

$\sum x_1$ = Total number of the highest answer scores

Then the scores are categorised based on these categories:

Table 3: Range Score and Category

Range Score (%)	Category
0 -34	Negative Perspective
35 - 67	Neutral Perspective
68 -100	Positive Perspective

After all the data has been tabulated, it will be interpreted using in-depth analysis and presented in a descriptive form.

4. Findings

4.1. Students' perspective viewed from the questionnaire result

The following is a summary of the students' answers to the distributed questionnaire:

Table 4: Questionnaire Result

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Learning through the animated video from Powtoon help me to understand the materials in writing class.	16.2%	70.3%	10.8%	0%	2.7%
2.	Learning through the animated video from Powtoon help me to increase my writing skill.	10.8%	67.6%	13.5%	0%	8.1%
3.	Learning the English writing materials through the animated video from Powtoon can make the learning process interesting.	62.2%	29.7%	2.7%	0%	5.4%
4.	The motion from the animated video from Powtoon distracts my understanding in learning Writing.	5.4%	21.6%	18.9%	45.9%	8.1%
5.	I feel bored every time I watch animated videos from Powtoon because they are not interesting.	0%	5.4%	5.4%	45.9%	43.2%
6.	I difficult to understand the explanation and the instruction in the animated video from Powtoon.	0%	5.4%	13.5%	73%	8.1%

7.	The animation is more interested than the materials.	16.2%	37.8%	37.8%	8.1%	16.2%
8.	The animation used appropriate with the materials.	13.5%	73%	13.5%	0%	0%
9.	Because the animation is interesting, I am excited to learn English writing.	24.3%	59.5%	10.8%	2.7%	2.7%
10.	I prefer Powtoon's animated videos with music than Powtoon's animated video with voice over about the material.	24.3%	27%	27%	18.9%	2.7%
11.	Learning through the animated video from Powtoon increase my motivation in learning English writing.	27%	62.2%	8.1%	2.7%	0%
12.	I get many benefits from English writing materials using animated video from Powtoon.	18.9%	70.3%	10.8%	0%	0%
13.	There are many challenges of learning English writing materials using Powtoon.	2.7%	27%	35.1%	27%	8.1%

Based on the table above, most students agree that learning using animated videos using Powtoon helps them understand the material in writing class. In line with this, point 2 also shows that more than half of the total participants agree that the animated video from Powtoon even helps students improve their writing skills. This is certainly due to some reasons. One of them is that material that utilizes animated videos from Powtoon can indeed make learning more engaging for students, as evidenced by 62.2% of participants who strongly agree with this. However, the use of animated videos must also be careful. It is because animated videos from Powtoon could distracts students' understanding when learning writing. Even though 45.9% of participants disagreed with this fourth point, the number 21.6% who agreed and even 5.4% who strongly agreed with this needs to be emphasized. In this regard, almost all students did not agree that using animated videos from Powtoon could bore them. As has been touched upon, the use of animated videos from Powtoon actually makes learning more engaging rather than makes the students bored.

Regarding explanations and instructions that use animated videos with Powtoon which are difficult to understand, 73% of students disagree on this. Hence, similar to Powtton which helps students understand the material presented through animated videos, explanations and instructions are just as easy. However, the ease of students in understanding the material must also pay attention to how the animation is presented. Point 7 shows that 16.2% of students strongly agree and 37.8% agree that the animation used using Powtoon can be more interesting than the material the teacher wants to convey. Hence, the teacher should at least be able to use animation that is appropriate and not too excessive so that understanding of the material can remain the focus of students. Evidenced by the fact that there were no students who disagreed that the animation used was appropriate with the material, it indicates that lecturers in this study were able to use appropriate Powtoon animation for the students. The use of this animation also affects students' motivation in learning. Based on point 9, 24.3% of students strongly agree and 59.5% agree that they are excited to learn English writing also due to the interesting animation factor. Hence, this finding supports point 5 that most students do not agree that the use of animated Powtoon videos can make them bored.

The Powtoon app provides many features. Even though animated videos are a selling point for this one application, the use of other features that support animated videos is actually also important. One of the features offered is the addition of musical elements to animated videos or voice overs. However, most of the students prefer animated videos that use music rather than those that use voice over about the material. This is evidenced by 24.3% of students who strongly agree and 27% agree with the 10th point statement. With this support, 62.2% of students believed that their motivation to learn English writing increased because of the animated video from Powtoon. Apart from that, 18.9% of students strongly agree and 70.3% of students agree that they feel many benefits from using animated videos from Powtoon as a medium for teaching English writing materials. Meanwhile, there were 27% of students who agreed with regards to the many challenges of learning English writing materials using Powtoon. This indicates that some students have encountered challenges in using Powtoon in their classes.

To ascertain whether Powtoon is appropriate for use as a learning medium to improve students' English writing, the following is the scoring of the questionnaire points that have been explained:

Table 4: Questionnaire Result's Scoring

No	Statements	Score	Percentage (%)	Category
1.	Learning through the animated video from Powtoon help me to understand the materials in writing class.	147	79.46	Positive
2.	Learning through the animated video from Powtoon help me to increase my writing skill.	138	74.59	Positive
3.	Learning the English writing materials through the animated video from Powtoon can make the learning process interesting.	164	88.65	Positive
4.	The motion from the animated video from Powtoon distracts my understanding in learning Writing.	122	65.95	Neutral
5.	I feel bored every time I watch animated videos from Powtoon because they are not interesting.	158	85.41	Positive
6.	I difficult to understand the explanation and the instruction in the animated video from Powtoon.	142	76.76	Positive
7.	The animation is more interested than the materials.	134	72.43	Positive
8.	The animation used appropriate with the materials.	148	80.00	Positive
9.	Because the animation is interesting, I am excited to learn English writing.	148	80.00	Positive
10.	I prefer Powtoon's animated videos with music than Powtoon's animated video with voice over about the material.	130	70.27	Positive
11.	Learning through the animated video from Powtoon increase my motivation in learning English writing.	153	82.70	Positive
12.	I get many benefits from English writing materials using animated video from Powtoon.	151	81.62	Positive
13.	There are many challenges of learning English writing materials using Powtoon.	115	62.16	Neutral
Total		1850	76.92	Positive

Based on the calculations above, a total score of 1850 students (76.92%) proves that Powtoon may be used as a digital learning medium to enhance writing abilities. It indicates that, overall, the students have a favorable opinion of the employment of Powtoon as a digital

learning media to hone their writing abilities. The transcript of the students' interview confirmed this finding.

4.2. Students' perspectives viewed from the interview result

From the results of interviews with selected students, it was found that some benefits of using Powtoon as a digital learning media to improve the writing skills are as follows:

Student A: "It makes the learning activities more interesting and avoids monotonous activities in learning process. The animation in Powtoon provides brief and interesting explanation. It makes me understand the material well."

Student B: "Powtoon makes me understand the material, increase my motivation to learn writing materials and enjoy during the learning process."

Student C: "Using animated video from Powtoon gives me some advantages like we are not easily get bored studying because the materials are attractive, and the explanation is written clearly, and it makes learning more interactive."

However, the students also revealed that there are some drawbacks of using Powtoon as digital learning media to improve the writing skill are as follow:

Student D: "It's different from using face-to-face explanation because I can't directly ask the lecturers about materials that I don't understand well."

Student E: "Sometimes the animation is too fast and difficult to be understood without the lecturers' explanation."

Student F: "My focus is distracted because the animation is more interested than the materials. Sometimes, I focus more on the animation than the materials."

Hence, all the benefits and positive sides of Powtoon as a medium of learning still need adjustments and consideration of several things so that the use of this application can be more effective when implemented in the learning process in the classroom.

5. Discussion

From the results shown above, it is clear that most students view Powtoon favourably as a digital learning media for enhancing their writing skills in Academic Writing class. The finding is consistent with a study by Yuliantini (2021), which demonstrates that Powtoon has several advantageous features for EFL students in boosting their English skills, including writing skills. Those features include text, music, animation, characters, and audio-visual. Therefore, the use of animated videos offered by Powtoon to make the student learning process more attractive. It is supported by the opinion of Kuswanto and Radiansah (2018) who stated that beauty, attractiveness and interactivity in a learning media are a means so that students are not bored in following lessons and the biggest effect is that students are expected to be motivated and make it easier to receive learning material. Not only that, because the lecturer is able to provide a brief and clear explanation of the animated video made using Powtoon, this really helps students understand the material provided. Since this Powtoon media makes the delivery of material by the teacher more enjoyable and also makes it easier for students to understand, their motivation to learn also increases.

As previously explained, students who are motivated and excited to take part in learning are likely to enjoy the learning process and eventually affect their learning achievements later. It is crucial because studies have shown a positive association between interest and student learning outcomes, with excellent student learning outcomes following high student learning interest (Dianawati et al., 2018). On the other hand, the delivery of interesting and interactive material using Powtoon also affects the level of student concentration in the learning process, where they will not get bored easily. As a result, the interactive learning environment will undoubtedly boost students' motivation to engage in learning activities (Sabilla et al., 2020; Sukiyasa & Sukoco, 2013). Nevertheless, this requires effort from the lecturer or material creator at Powtoon to provide clear explanatory writing and is supported by other elements such as appropriate animations which help students understand the purpose of the video. Thus, not only does learning become more interesting, attractive but also more interactive using Powtoon. This is due to the fact that in general, teachers do need to use appealing, fascinating, and creative media in the teaching and learning process (Laksmi, 2013).

The use of Powtoons exists as a medium to help teachers deliver material to students, not to replace the teacher's own role. The teacher is recognised as having the biggest impact on the success of the class, according to (Shymansky, 1978), despite the fact that there are many other aspects that contribute to effective classroom education. Additionally, the usage of technology in the form of learning media can be a substitute to get around the time and space constraints of the current learning process so that teachers don't have to spend too much time going over the material with the students (Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019). This needs to be emphasised because this study found that there were challenges faced by Academic Writing students in getting teaching that applied Powtoon media in their classes. If the teacher only gives students animated videos from Powtoon without any direct explanation from the lecturer themselves, it is likely that this is not enough. Even though the animated video has been designed in such a way with various elements such as objects, writing, music, voiceover or something else, students may still have questions that must be asked to the lecturer.

That is actually related to the quality of the animated video itself, whether it is good or not so good that students are less able to understand what the animation video contains properly. As a consequence, a clear and easy-to-understand animated video quality is needed which is supported by the help of the teacher as a facilitator to provide further understanding regarding the material in the video. This is done so that not only do students understand the material in the Powtoon animated video, but there is discussion and learning that is supported by the presence of the lecturer in the process of understanding the material. However, it is also important to keep in mind that the video animation itself can have the opposite effect of what it intended to do—increase student engagement in the learning process. This is due to the claim made by Weiss et al. (2002) that animations seem to keep users from focusing on the important issues. Devi (2005) added that one of the drawbacks of studying using video animation is that it can cause learners to become distracted by watching the cartoons again and over. If the animation given is too excessive, then there can be a disturbance in the focus of the students who are not actually focused on the material to be conveyed through the video. Therefore, the use of Powtoon features such as animation, for example, must remain within safe and appropriate limits so that they can help students understand the material which is then supported by further discussion with the lecturers.

6. Conclusion

Powtoon can be one of the solutions to create interesting materials for teaching Academic Writing, especially in blended learning environment. Most students give positive perspective (76.92%) about using Powtoon as digital learning media to improve writing skills. The students are interested in learning writing by using Powtoon. The animation in Powtoon video is able to attract students' attention. It makes them understand the materials easily. The teaching and learning process is also enjoyable and motivates them to learn English writing. The challenges are for some students the motion of the animation distracted their concentration in understanding the materials. Some students still like to have face-to-face teaching and learning process so they can ask directly to the teacher if they do not know about some thing in the materials. Hence, this study suggests that the teacher who implement Powtoon as learning media in their class should use appropriate animation so that it makes the material more interesting as well as helps the students to understand the material. However, teacher's explanation and further discussion along with the students is also really needed to support the students' understanding toward the materials.

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