PADLET APP USES IN TESL: A SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Digital technology is found capable of playing a vital role in efforts to change from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness in classroom management for TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) by introducing autonomous learning strategies into the methodology followed. Therefore, integrating technology into TESL mechanisms is considered of paramount significance. In that context, Padlet is found usable as an efficient online app that can be used to boost active learning among students. Based on the results achieved in an experiment with a random group of 48 first-year Law undergraduates and 20 Computing freshmen at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University who had been engaged in Padlet-based online learning activities in ESL for a period of four weeks, this paper analyses using SPSS 23.0 the data gathered in an online survey. Overall, the perceptions of the study population regarding the use of Padlet have been reported as positive. As revealed by the results, most of the participants (88.2%) were new to the use of Padlet app by the time it was introduced. Nearly, 79.4% of them identified that Padlet can make learning collaborative. In the meantime, 92.6% were convinced that Padlet is very influential in the process of knowledge sharing and 82.4% that it is a form of good motivation. Padlet has thus proven to be a very efficient tool in TESL. Hence, it is suggested here that it is important to include activities based on Padlet when designing curricula for teaching English as a second language.

KEYWORDS: *Padlet, English language teaching, ESL learners, Online Education*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Technological development in the modern era has greatly influenced many aspects of human life including health, education and industry (Bosamia, 2013). This has given birth to massive transitions in numerous human engagements. Education has become one of the core subjects of this novel change. The involvement of modern technology has drastically changed the traditional teacher-centred method of teaching to a more focused student-centred method of teaching. This has added new glamour to the art of teaching (Mascolo, 2009). The use of technology is a key factor behind developing independent learners as it makes the process of learning easy and comfortable. Modern research catering to English Language teaching has given greater focus to developing autonomous learners (Zaphiris and Ioannou, 2014). Therefore, integrating technology into English language teaching is of paramount significance.

As the world moves ahead with highly developed technology, there have been massive improvements concerning English Language teaching (Jana and Iveta, 2019). Therefore, the approaches utilized in English Language teaching have undergone tremendous changes. This has enabled language teachers to widen their scope of teaching beyond the context of a traditional classroom. The vast expansion of science and technology has heavily influenced the mechanisms used in language teaching and learning. Recent studies have discovered that integrating novel technology in the language classroom has turned out to be a leading factor that boosts the motivation of students. It encourages active learning and makes the students creative and efficient in solving problems (Stockwell, 2013). Bracewell & Sivin-Kachala & Bialo (2000) mentioned that technology has the potential to enhance students' self-concept and has a positive influence on achievements (Marleni, 2020).

As suggested by Watkins, the employment of novel technologies in the classroom can help the students intensify their learning experiences. Hence, modern-day lecturers and teachers make numerous attempts to introduce novel mechanisms in teaching and learning the English Language (Watkins et al., 2007). As a result of these new approaches, the students increase their level of motivation. Further, it will enhance their level of autonomy in learning.

Padlet is a freely available web-based application that serves as a "wall" that gives access for the students to post pictures, words and videos. That can be seen and shared with others when the link is shared. Many researchers have highlighted the significance of the dawn of Web 2.0 in reinforcing collaborative practices. The web tools such as blogs and Facebook have proven to have a positive impact on language learning classrooms (Omar et al., 2012). During the e-learning classes, Padlet can be used very productively as a whiteboard. It can serve as a means of keeping records, giving feedback, reviewing, summarizing and applying the key points. Further, it can be utilized as a space for after-class activities. This allows the students to cooperate securely with an online community (Rashid et al., 2019).

As mentioned by Fageeh (2011), the students find the use of Padlet a comfortable means of learning. Further, he has reinforced the fact that Padlet becomes very useful for students when learning writing (Mohd Said et al., 2013). Besides, previous literature brings to light that Padlet is an efficient tool for improving the active learning of students. This also enables the students to sharpen their creative and critical thinking skills. In addition, there is a positive impact of Padlet in improving the level of achievement among students (Megat et al., 2020).

Researchers strongly believe that Padelt is an influential tool in the process of language teaching and learning. It is identified as an efficient means of practising in-class activities, especially concerning teaching writing. This plays a vital role in developing writing skills which is the core of language learning (Mahmud, 2019).

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the affinity of students with the use of computers and mobile phones. Introduction of the distance learning has

made them highly attached to electronic devices. Even during this post-pandemic era, students often get distracted from their studies due to the influence of mobile phones and computers.

This new change has brought drastic changes in the teaching methods employed in language teaching.Further, this has increased the challenges come across by language teachers. Therefore, in this modern era, one of the most difficult challenges faced by language lecturers is the low levels of concentration among students. The high levels of their addiction to electronic devices make them distracted easily. Generally, young adults spend more than five hours a day with their mobile phones (Pratama, 2018). Further, this would result in poor academic performance among the students (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). Hence, language lecturers must become strategic when planning their teaching approaches. Besides, it is necessary to use technology to keep the students engaged in language-related activities. Therefore, Padlet becomes a very useful tool in boosting the interest among students in language learning.

Padlet has become a prominent facilitator in developing interactive relationships between the lecturer and the student. Effective interaction of this nature helps in developing collaborative learning. This makes the lecturer become a facilitator rather than playing the traditional role of a teacher. Through Padlet the students can work together collaboratively with their colleagues. It creates a very comfortable environment for the students to share their attitudes and perceptions. Hence, Padlet becomes an excellent platform to enhance the student's exposure to collaborative learning (Mohd Said et al., 2013).

Therefore, Padlet has become an influential platform in the process of English Language teaching. This has been introduced to the context of Sri Lanka very recently with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the knowledge and the use of Padlet among Sri Lankan students are limited. Furthermore, there have been many studies conducted all over the world to assess the effectiveness of using Padelt in language teaching among university students. However, there

is a dearth of studies conducted in the Sri Lankan setting. Hence, it is important to assess the students' perceptions about the use of Padlet in language learning and teaching in the higher education setting of Sri Lanka.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Padlet has gained recognition as an effective educational tool in various contexts, with multiple studies highlighting its potential benefits. A study carried out by DeWitt, Alias, and Siraj based on a group of 40 university students reveals that Padlet is used as an effective learning tool by university students (DeWitt et al., 2015). In addition, Awaludin, Abd Karim and Mohd Saad (2017) have conducted a study on the perspectives on Padlet among 30 Diploma in Accountancy students at University Technology MARA (UiTM), Tapah who undergo a compulsory English course. This study has also revealed that the students formed positive attitudes toward using Padlet in English writing class.

Moreover, Thomas, Morin and Ly (2015) have demonstrated through their research that the employment of technological tools in the classroom setting has the potential to improve the critical thinking skills of the students. It has also been revealed that when students are kept engaged in activities through technology-driven tools, they tend to become creative and critical in terms of their thinking (Mahmud, 2019).

Henry, Castek and Zawilinski, 2012, have revealed through research that students become capable of developing longer texts with the use of modern learning tools. This gives the students the necessary freedom and enthusiasm to revise and develop good writing (Henry et al., 2012).

As mentioned by Stannard, 2015, Padlet has become an efficient tool for keeping students engaged in brainstorming sessions, discussions, and project tasks (Haddad and Anggraini, 2021). Most importantly, the students get the ability to work with Padlet at their own pace. This provides the opportunity for the students to get involved in learning creatively without

the constraints of time and space. Using Padlet in English Language teaching is highly beneficial as it enables the students who are shy in class to be expressive. Besides, the lecturers also become comfortable as they can indicate their comments on the individual performance of the students. Hence, this improves the satisfaction and the interest of both the lecturers and students (Fadhilawati et al., 2020).

In addition, a study conducted in the UK concerning Bioscience and Dental undergraduates revealed that the majority of the students in both streams identified Padlet as an effective tool for promoting collaborative learning (Mehta et al., 2021).

A study carried out to investigate the students' perceptions of the impact of Using Padlet on Class Engagement revealed that Padlet enhances the students' level of engagement, and energetic learning and creates a highly favourable environment for learning. Moreover, it also promotes independent and collaborative learning (Nadeem, 2021). Another study has been carried out at Sultan Agung Islamic University among the students enrolled on an English Language Education programme. The study aimed to assess the perceptions of the students on the use of Padlet in the class Introduction to Functional Linguistics. The results of the study have revealed that the majority of the students were positive about the use of Padlet during their learning (Anwar et al., 2019).

Padlet is identified as one of the effective tools to be used in learning by DeWitt, Alias, and Siraj (2015) through their study findings. Moreover, Awaludin, Abd Karim, and Mohd Saad (2017) were able to engage in research on the use of Padlet by the ESL learners in their academic writing. Nevertheless, it has been identified that both the above studies were carried out with a participation of few students, therefore it is difficult to generalise the findings of those two studies to a large group of students. According to Thomas, Morin, and Ly (2015), the use of technology mediated teaching in the classroom can improve the critical thinking of the students. However, there is a gap which prevails in terms of identifying the precise methods and instructional

strategies in maximizing the potential benefits of those tools. In addition, Henry, Castek, and Zawilinski (2012) revealed that modern tools like Padlet have the ability to facilitate the student learning by helping them to develop longer texts and involve in revision. Nonetheless, there is a deficiency in the availability of experiential evidence concerning the long-term impact of such tools on writing skills. Moreover, there is a need for more inclusive research which caters to the engagement and adaptability of such tools in a wide range of learning environments.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as a descriptive cross-sectional study. The sample size comprised forty-eight first-year Law undergraduates and twenty computing first-year undergraduates enrolled in General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University. The study sample was selected randomly, and they had been exposed to online education since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were subjected to four weeks of online learning activities through the Padlet App. After it was introduced, the students engaged in writing tasks, assignments and other group activities using Padlet. Further, the students were also allowed to collaboratively work with their colleagues using the Padlet. In addition, the students were able to get feedback from their peers and lecturers via Padlet. At the end of the four weeks, the students' perceptions regarding the use of Padlet were assessed. Since the data collection of the study was conducted during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic an online questionnaire developed in English was shared with the selected participants to receive the completed questionnaires. The informed consent for attending the study was also taken online from the participants, once the purpose and the objectives were explained by providing an online information sheet before the questionnaire. The questionnaires did not consist of any sensitive questions which would create psychological embarrassment/ trauma for the participants. The participants were informed that they could leave the study at any time, and such departure from the study would not affect academic activities.

Moreover, all participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and there were no incentives or rewards for their contribution to the study. Furthermore, the participants were empowered to make queries on the questionnaire by providing them with the contact details of the investigators. The researchers assured the participants that all gathered data from the participants would be kept confidential and not released in public under any circumstance. The soft copies of all the data were stored and protected with a unique password, and the hard copies generated were stored and kept locked in a secure place. After five years, all the data will be deleted to secure the participants' privacy and confidentiality.

The questionnaire consisted of questions related to demographic information and perceptions of Padlet. A questionnaire was piloted among ten University undergraduates to determine the difficulty level of the items, ease of understanding of concepts in the items, any discomfort when responding, and the appropriate length of the questions before the data collection. The students who participated in the pilot study were excluded from the main study. The SPSS 23.0 version was used for descriptive data analysis.

4.   RESULTS

The mean age of the study population is 21.79±3.73 and the majority of them were females (60.3%). Only 11.8% of the undergraduates had heard about the Padlet web app before it was introduced to them and 79.4% of the participants got to know about this app through university lecturers (Table 1).

When considering the perceptions of the study population on Padlet, 98.5% of the study participants were enjoying learning English via Padlet. The majority of the study population respectively agreed and strongly agreed that the Padlet is convenient for learning English and it makes the learning experience interactive (54.4%, 25.0%), that it helps to explore new information and share knowledge with colleagues (67.6%, 25%), that it makes the experience of distance learning very interesting

Table 1 -Socio-demographic data

Demographic characteristics		Sample (n= 154)	
		Frequency	**%**
Age		Mean = 21.79 SD ±3.73 Range = 18 -37 years	
Gender	Female	41	60.3
	Male	27	39.7
Stream	Law	48	70.59
	Computing	20	29.41
Have you heard about Padlet before you began to use this in your English class?	Yes	08	11.8
	No	60	88.2
From where did you first hear about the Padelt?	University Lecturers	54	79.4
	Internet	12	17.6
	Other	01	1.5
	Friends	01	1.5

(60.3%, 26.5%), that it allows him/her to get engaged with his/her colleagues and lecturers with no restrictions of time and space (55.9%, 22.1%), that it is a good way of storing information for future use (66.2%, 20.6%), that it is an effective (63.2%, 30.9%) and motivational (61.8%, 20.6%) academic platform to conduct distance education, and that it is a good platform to learn English (61.8%, 27.9%) (Table 2).

Table 2: perception of Padlet

Item	Characterizes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you enjoy learning English via Padlet?	Yes	67	98.5
	No	01	1.5
The use of Padlet makes the learning experience interactive.	Strongly Agree	21	30.9
	Agree	42	61.8
	Neutral	05	7.4
Padlet helps me share my knowledge	Strongly Agree	19	27.9

with my colleagues	Agree	40	58.8
	Neutral	09	13.2
Learning English via the Padlet is convenient for me	Strongly Agree	17	25.0
	Agree	37	54.4
	Neutral	13	19.1
	Disagree	01	1.5
Padlet helps me explore new information	Strongly Agree	17	25.0
	Agree	46	67.6
	Neutral	04	5.9
	Disagree	01	1.5
The use of Padlet makes the experience of distance learning very interesting	Strongly Agree	18	26.5
	Agree	41	60.3
	Neutral	09	13.2
Padlet allows me to get engaged with colleagues and lecturers with no restrictions on time and space.	Strongly Agree	15	22.1
	Agree	38	55.9
	Neutral	15	22.1
I am willing to use Padlet in my future studies	Strongly Agree	14	20.6
	Agree	43	63.2
	Neutral	10	14.7
	Disagree	01	1.5
Padlet is an effective platform for academic studies done via distance education	Strongly Agree	21	30.9
	Agree	43	63.2
	Neutral	04	5.9
I feel motivated when using Padlet during the lectures	Strongly Agree	14	20.6
	Agree	42	61.8
	Neutral	12	17.6
Padlet is a good way of storing information for future use	Strongly Agree	14	20.6
	Agree	45	66.2
	Neutral	09	13.2
Padlet is a good platform for learning English	Strongly Agree	19	27.9
	Agree	42	61.8
	Neutral	07	10.3

5. DISCUSSION

The current study aimed at assessing the perception of the web application 'Padlet' among first-year undergraduates at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka. The results of the study were categorized into key themes developed out of the responses received through the questionnaire. Motivation and Engagement, Interactive Learning and Collaboration and Convenience and Practicality were the major themes identified. The above themes have the potential in providing valuable insights into the usage of Padlet in the classroom setting.

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the study sample enjoy learning English through the use of Padlet. A similar study conducted in Indonesia (Anwar et al., 2019) and Egypt (Nadeem, 2021), indicated that the Padlet has the potential to enhance the motivation and the engagement of the students.

However, a study conducted by Mahmud (2019) in Malaysia revealed that Padlet has no significant impact on improving the writing skills in English. The participants of the current study identified Padlet as an effective tool with regard to learning English, knowledge sharing and engaging in academic activities. Therefore, the findings of the study align with the broader literature available on the effectiveness and the practicality in the use of technology-enhanced learning tools.

The findings of the present study appear to be similar to the previous studies conducted in Indonesia and Egypt. However, Mahmud in his study conducted in Malaysia highlighted on the significance of context-specific research in assessing the efficiency of Padlet.

Further, it has been noted that the nature of the activities given to the students and the English language proficiency of the students will also contribute to the students' experience when using Padlet. The positive attitude among the students regarding the use of Padlet can lead to enhanced motivation and interactive learning in a classroom setting. It will create a favourable environment for cooperative learning. However, the teachers need to make sure that they create tailor-made Padlet activities to cater to the specific learning objectives.

Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

The findings of the current study have emphasized the perceptions of the first-year undergraduates at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka with regard to their experience in using the web application 'Padlet.' It was evident that Padlet has proven to bring a positive experience for the students in the ESL context. Motivation, interactive learning, convenience, and collaborative opportunities were identified as key themes derived from the findings of the study. Although the findings of the current study become similar to the previous research conducted in similar settings, it is necessary to conduct further experimental research to understand the context-based differences in the use of Padlet.

The high level of students' satisfaction when using Padlet reveals that it has the potential to enhance the students' enthusiasm in learning. Moreover, the high degree of flexibility and convenience of Padlet with regard to time and space contribute substantially for its success as an educational platform. In addition, Padlet helps in promoting interactive and collaborative learning, making the language learning and teaching a promising experience for the students and teachers. Nevertheless, it is necessary to investigate the use of Padlet in diverse educational contexts and among students of different levels of English language proficiency. It will facilitate in making conclusions that are applicable to a more generalized population. Hence, it is recommended to integrate the use of Padlet based activities into teaching practice catering to the specific learning objectives and desired outcomes. Further, educators can engage in different experimental activities by using Padlet to enhance student motivation and collaborative learning in ESL context. Moreover, including the use of technology driven activities into the curriculum will expose the students into valuable skills of the modern generation.

The findings of the study contribute to the current discourse on integrating technology into education. Moreover, it brings to light the potential benefits of using Padlet as an effective learning tool in English language classroom.

One of the limitations of the present study is that it has been carried out in a specific educational context where the English language proficiency of the students remain at a satisfactory level. Therefore, the findings of the study will not be able to apply for a generalized population.

In addition, the current study does not aim to investigate the long-term impact on the use of Padlet. Therefore, further experimental research is needed to explore the sustainable use of Padlet over a considerable period of time. Further, it is also important to understand the potential challenges in using Padlet in ESL context. Despite the aforementioned challenges the present study contributes to highlight potential benefits of using Padlet as an effective study tool in a ESL setting.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available with the corresponding author upon request.

Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that they have no relevant conflicts of interest.

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