

A Critical Review on Using Canva as a Visual Media Platform for English Language Learning

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Abstract

A critical review of literature was conducted to examine the current body of knowledge on using online visual media platforms such as Canva for English language learning. There are two primary approaches to review of literature: the topical and critical review approaches. This article discusses about the critical review that was conducted using a 5 steps method: (1) defining a research objective and research question, (2) observing particular sample of sources in the literature observed, (3) analysing the data that was collected from the sources after applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, (4) reporting the findings from critical analysis using descriptive statistics and lastly, (5) discussing implications from these results that were identified. From the critical review, the author was able to identify themes which were constructed into a conceptual framework based on their relationships. This review sheds a light on learners of the benefits they gain from utilizing visual media for learning the English language. However, the knowledge gaps in this critical review warrant further research in the field of educational technology using a specific online visual media platform such as Canva for English language learning.

Keywords: Critical Review, English Language, Language Learning, Visual Media, Canva, Online Platforms

Introduction

Online learning or e-learning calls for a better usage of visual media platforms in the 21st century learning environment where technologies such as digital devices are mobilized for a more profound and effective learning experiences. Using technology increases the effectiveness of learning in all aspects of education (Reiners et al., 2005). According to Olcott (2021), the 21st century faces the greatest scientific challenges in the effort to master, organize and extract useful knowledge from the massive flow of information made available by recent data collection systems and computing resources. Students are able to associate with technologies for many reasons other than just for entertainment purposes. Students are impacted in the way they think, learn and interact and at the same time, they display amazing potentials and skills they have when utilizing technology. As the years escalate, various emergence of visual media platform types is now incorporated into almost every field of study in the educational world, in such a way that every learners' style of learning is taken into account and utilized for a better demonstration and interpretation of learning technologies. This appearance of visual media is directly involved in shaping students' ways of communicating, collaborating, operating and forming social constructs themselves. These learners are completely captivated and engaged with recent digital technologies, and it is now an entirely integrate aspect of these learners' lives (Green & Hannon, 2007). This especially aids in their English language learning strategies as they adapt to modern techniques in learning the English language. Learners are required to take a step further into the digital learning systems and networks than where they are now, in order to challenge their competency in important areas in education, especially in learning the English language. A single teacher and a student can gain a large number of benefits when assimilating visual media platform into their teaching and learning strategies and methods. Ahead of this, when such method is applied to groups and networks across the educational field, those benefits become competent, multiplied and produces community-friendly learning environment. The English language teaching and learning, throughout the years, has developed from a pedagogical classroom into heutagogical learning environment by maintaining the alignment of four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Apart from the pandemic being one of the main stressors in pushing the learning age to be conducted online, learners have a wider chance and opportunities to enhance their English language learning when accessing learning materials online rather than using offline methods. Learners want their learning experiences to be meaningful and purposeful in a way that they are able to apply their learnt knowledge in real life at the moment and in the years onwards effectively. The role of technology in this case is to create a meaningful and purposeful learning environment for learners to not only acquire knowledge for themselves, but to also share it among other learners in order to develop a learning community sharing mass numbers of interests and able to produce meaningful influences throughout their lifelong learning. This phenomenon is known as connectivism learning theory which dominates a large part of e-learning using visual media platforms in this 21st century. As means to conduct an effective learning session, the 21st century learning technologies are more adaptable and accessible for learners to grasp English language proficiency. Displaying information using graphics, motions, videos and photos are contained in visual media platforms. Learners are capable to access thousands and more contents in visual media platforms to improvise their language

learning methods. One of the well-known visual media platform, Canva, brings plenty of visual features into action for learners to operate them into their learning routine. Each learners have their own environmental factors and attributes that affect and influence their learning culture. This challenge is tackled by modern learning technologies where they adopt appealing contents for learners that vary in styles, numbers and even connectivity. Canva is a visual media platform that is mainly used for producing classroom teaching materials, presentation slides, video and poster editing. This online designing platform can be freely accessed by every user and to work on their projects individually and collaboratively. Moreover, businesses and marketing campaigns have adopted this visual media platform to create compelling designs for their projects. Learners can start their visual designs from scratch using their own creativity and even use templates prepared by the platform. Apart from that, their learning process can be more appealing with the use of animations and GIFs featured in Canva. These circumstances provided by the visual media platform paves an engaging way of English language learning for learners especially in higher institutions. The collaborative feature allows them to create a project input and output through multiple email sharing, editing in real time all at once, and saving the projects in various formats. Learners can extract important information and content from English language learning, arrange and display them in interesting styles and concepts, which in return constructs meaningful learning experience for them to remember and apply in their learning routine. At the same time, the catchy features offered by visual media platforms for learning ignites motivations among language learners to maintain their pace and progress throughout the process of achieving a successful language proficiency, which is beneficial for their education and career life.

This article focuses and explores on the discussion of using visual media platform such as Canva to aid English language learning among online learners. This case was accomplished through a critical review of recent literature dealing with the theme of this article. Correspondent to research practices, this article first addresses the formulation of the problem, then proceeding to the presentation method of data collection and analysis, and lastly, presenting the results of the analysis with their implications.

A literature review expresses the current knowledge pertaining to a particular domain. This is done by categorizing the topic into different portions and giving attention to each issue sequentially. Researchers must ensure that their chosen topic of research is novel and relevant to their field of study and in this paper, the field of language education is given importance and priority. Literature reviews are conducted by extracting information from articles, books, chapters in books and even reports. Researchers while working on this section of their study are allowed to decide whether they want to keep or reject each retrieved article. Writing a critical review in this paper takes several elements of view into account. Critical reviews allow researchers to evaluate each article using specific criteria that fits the domain of their chosen studies. A critical review comes in handy as it offers social science researchers a clear and pertinent view of all findings in their specific area based on specific criteria (Rosenthal et al., 2001). Researchers are able to adopt extremely thorough survey and review of all available and retrieved documents and articles. A critical review is done by discussing a particular book or article in details of its ideas, themes and content of a specific topic. It allows writers to provide strong description, analysis and interpretation of information regarding a certain topic that allow readers to see the article's value and credibility. Other than summarizing and evaluating the ideas and information from articles, writers also are able to shed a light on the discussed topic from their point of view and relate

them to various theories, concepts and approaches. Critical review also focuses on what the writer already knows and hopes to spend more effort into adding their own application of analysis from what they have acquired from related texts.

Guzzo et al (1987) recommended approaching the task of conducting a critical review in the same fashion as a quantitative study. This calculates the three steps in conducting a study of critical review, which are formulation of the problem to be addressed, collection and analysis of the data and reporting of the results (Guzzo et al., 1987). Proceeding this, that the writer or the researcher needs to clearly state the study objectives, methods and the criteria that will be applied when carrying out the critical review (Guzzo et al., 1987). This study uses these cases and important elements of critical review to write and discuss the literature review section related to the formulated research questions.

The aim of conducting this article on a critical review is to examine the extent of using visual media platforms such as Canva to encourage English language learning online among various type of learners in this 21st century. The problem in this study is addressed by formulating the following research question: to what extent do recent and respected publications deal with the theme of application of visual media platforms such as Canva to encourage English language learning? This question can be divided into two main themes which are (1) visual media platform accommodating online learning experience and (2) the effectiveness of online visual media platforms for English language learning. These two themes were used to categorize the articles that were retrieved for this critical review.

Methodology

According to Guzzo et al (1987), states that it is important to do a comprehensive review of the literature to locate all extant studies relevant to the topic of review. To ensure that the retrieved articles fit within the domain of this study, a thorough and narrow search of all relating articles was regulated before particularly selecting appropriate and affiliated articles that deals with the research question and themes of this study. As a start, the keywords related to the theme of visual media platform accommodating online learning experience and the effectiveness of online visual media platforms for English language learning were used to retrieve articles from two online databases: the SCOPUS database and Google Scholar website. SCOPUS database provides a larger abstract and citation in various subject areas of language, arts, science and many more. A total of 13 articles from SCOPUS database and 4 articles from Google Scholar database were retrieved. The keywords used were 'Canva learning', 'visual media learning', 'visual media platforms for online learning', 'using visual media platforms for language learning' and 'using visual media platform for English language learning'. The method of searching for relevant articles prior to the initial topic selected was done too. A total of 17 articles were accessed in this stage. This process is conducted by first, entering the document keywords that fit the theme of the topic. Second, the document titles, document type, authors, years and sources are given attention to. Related documents that show up at the right section of the databases are accessed by ensuring they too, fit the theme of this study. Only peer-reviewed studies, published in a scholarly journal (magazines, conferences ad newspapers were excluded) between 2017 and 2022 are included in this review. The retrieved studies were also needed to be published in English language only. The results of the information search are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

The Total Articles Classified by the Databases

| Databases | Keywords | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| | Canva learning | Visual media learning | Visual media platforms for online learning | Visual media platforms for language learning | Visual media platform for English language learning |
| SCOPUS | 3 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 11 |
| Google Scholar | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 5 | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 |

Selection of primary articles based on Table 1, comprises a total of 17 articles, retrieved from two databases: SCOPUS and Google Scholar. Therefore, inclusions and exclusions criteria were exercised to retrieve more relevant documents with good quality and fits the theme of the topic and to write a worthy critical review. First, publication years from 2017 and above were included and publications below the year 2017 were excluded to ensure the articles apply to most recent 21st century learning environment. Older articles may deal with older technology trends in education that may not be effective in this more modern age of learning.

Second, retrieved articles were ensured to be peer-reviewed. These articles offer valid research that are based on multiple experts' knowledge in discipline, which in return prevents falsified work from being adapted within an area of study. Articles that did not meet the peer-reviewed criterion are removed in this inclusion and exclusion criteria filter. Subsequent to this, the filter excluded all writings in the form of conference and book chapters as well.

Third, the inclusion and exclusion criteria filter helped remove articles where the studies did not focus on the education and technology field. Articles that did not evaluate visual media learning among learners in lower and higher institutions, explaining the strategies involved in visual media learning rather than the benefits of using visual media learning and focused solely on infographic learning were excluded. This filter helped the study to focus on a wider use of visual learning media instead of particular platforms such as infographics, audio visual aids and many more. This is because the visual media platform, Canva that is used as a topic of discussion in this study contains various visual aids for every type of learners. The Canva platform does not offer only a limited number and types of visual graphics and motions for individual and collaborative learning.

Lastly, the three research approaches involving qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method were included in this study. This is to ensure that the topic discussed has been effectively surveyed and analysed by previous researchers using various accepted methodologies. Using quantitative data collection and analysis method was important as it provides complete verification of statistical data obtained from the survey (Kolesnikov et al., 2019). Mixed-method research design, on the other hand, helped in measuring application analysis, perception and research validity (Tang & Intai, 2017), while qualitative data collection and analysis as it is "an umbrella term which encompasses enormous variety in terms of paradigm,

approaches to data and methods for data analysis” (Elsa & Anwar, 2021). These revealed that the use of all three research methodologies were important to obtain a valid and strong result for data interpretation in the field of education using Canva as an online visual media platform for English language learning.

Results and Discussions

After the application of these four inclusion and exclusion criteria : (1) publication years ranging from 2017 and above, (2) peer-reviewed articles, (3) studies focusing on a wider use of visual media learning in the place a particular use of visual media and (4) using the three research design methodologies which are quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research design methodology, a total number of seven articles remained relevant to the theme of this study out of the seventeen articles searched initially. The details of the seven remaining articles are reported using a table as can be seen in Table 2. The table also shows only one study involving the themes being studied were found to have been conducted in Malaysia.

Table 2

Report of the Critical Analysis of Literature

| Authors | Year | Journal | SC | GS | VML | LL | Country | Data Collection Methods |
|-----------------------|------|--|----|----|-----|----|------------------------------|---|
| Liu et al | 2020 | International Journal of emerging Technologies in Learning | / | | / | | China, Russia and Kazakhstan | Survey Questionnaires |
| Wu et al | 2021 | International Journal of Web- Based Learning and Teaching Technologies | / | | / | / | China, Kazakhstan and Russia | Survey Questionnaire, Telephone Interview |
| Lazebna and Prykhodko | 2021 | Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies | / | | / | / | Ukraine | Observation protocol, Questionnaires |
| Salehudin et al | 2021 | European Journal of Educational Research | / | | / | / | Indonesia | Questionnaires |
| Wong et al | 2021 | Computer Assisted Language Learning | / | | / | / | United States | Observation protocol, Questionnaires |
| Elsa and Anwar | 2021 | Journal of English Teaching, Literature and Applied Linguistics | | / | / | / | Indonesia | Questionnaires |
| Tang and Intai | 2017 | Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education | | / | / | / | Malaysia | Test Analysis |

Note: SC=Scopus | GS=Google Scholar | VML=Visual Media Learning | LL=Language Learning

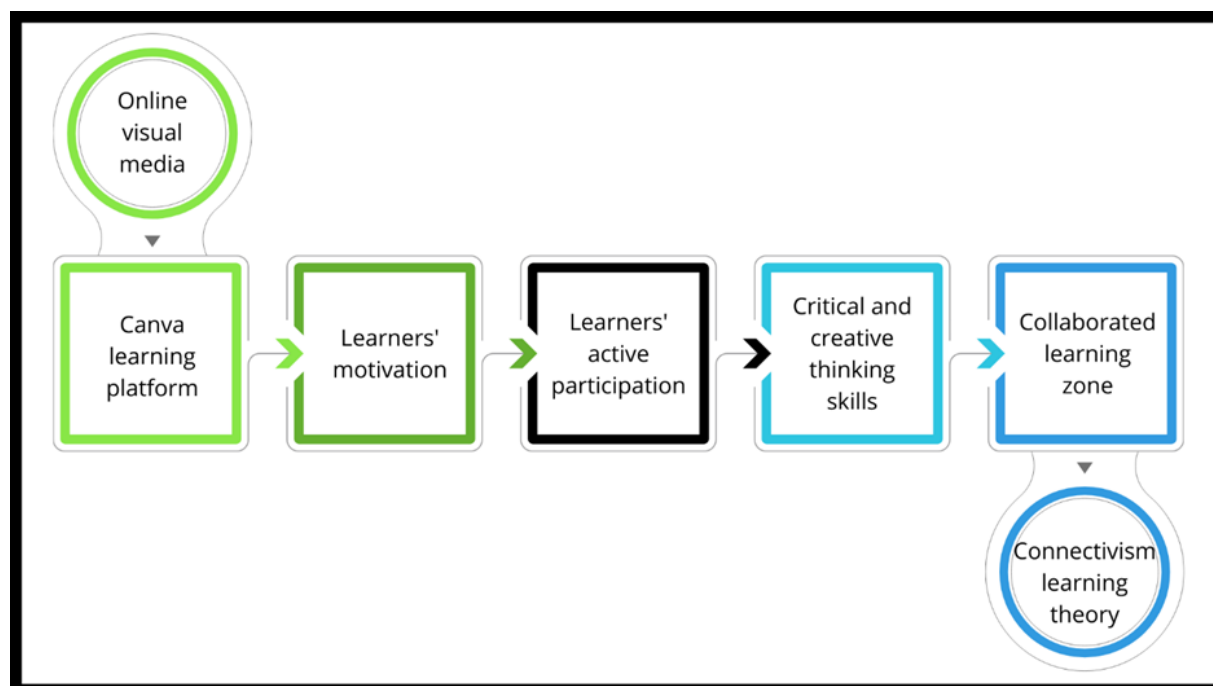
Referring to Table 2, various types of online visual media were practiced in their respective studies. Canva platform was analysed in three articles which is the highest number of online visual media used, while other platforms were analysed in less than three articles. Most of the articles discussed about language learning while English language specifically was discussed less, and the remaining article focused on communication skills in language learning. This shows that every language, including the English language had reasons by using

online visual media as a tool for learning in this 21st century. Liu et al (2020), reviewed that the engagement of online visual media brought several positive impacts in the learning process, and in this case, the English language learning. Learners' attentions were activated and stabilized on the information provided for a longer time. Moreover, with greater intensity, learners' information perception and memorizing activity showed improvement. Learner's motivation and their interest to perform further study of a particular subject also increases with the involvement of online visual media.

Online visual media tackles the challenges in e-learning and makes the learning process interactive, understands learners' needs, and tailors to the content of learners' needs and profiles (Kolesnikov et al., 2019). Apart from qualitatively improving the teaching and learning process with the use of online visual media aids, learners' behaviour, cognition, constructive skills and activism are promoted along with their independent thinking skills as they learn how to explore for necessary information in a critical space of time. Learners are able to perform better, contain stronger learning motivation and display more activeness in the learning process when the use of visual media are incorporated (Dineva et al., 2019) The prominence of using visual media platforms in the world of education allows learners to overcome constrains of the real world and provides them with the opportunity to explore domains of digital spaces. E-learning technologies prioritize the integration of visual media aids to bring forth an improved user experience and learners' independent learning zone.

Lazebna and Prykhodko (2021) state that the use of visual media in learning influences learners' memory, visual, auditory, emotional and motor perception. Large number of information that are required for learners to read become more effective when they are summarized and presented in the form of infographics, pictures, points and graphics. The review also states that learners' motivations are increased with the use of online visual media platform during the process of learning, which helps them train their general educational skills. Language learning turn interesting when learners are able to display what they have acquired using presentation aids and sharing them with their peers. Online visual media fosters learners' communication skills, logical thinking and the ability to self-express in language learning. The application of visual media platforms in distance learning conditions is an effective way to create a positive impression on learners' learning process (Salehudin et al., 2021). Moreover, the use of visual media increases the quality of learning as it takes learners' convenience into account.

Figure 1 shows a proposed framework which concluded process of learners undergoing the stages in learning using online visual media platforms. Each stage are the achievements learners gain and the elements they maintain in a repeated cycle of learning the English language. The use of online visual media platforms such as Canva, and other reviewed platforms in Table 2 aid learners to sustain their motivation. Learners also show active participation in the learning process and equip themselves with critical and creative thinking skills. They use all these gained elements and create a collaborated learning environment where they share language knowledge across their built network using online visual media platforms. Siemens (2004) states in his principles of connectivism, observes that the connectivism learning theory is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources. Learners utilize this built network by interacting what they have practiced and developed into a series of connections, which in return creates a shared-knowledge community. The reviews in this paper, states various online visual media platforms that are put into action in this 21st century learning style. Canva platform stood out the most as it provides opportunity for every field of study to utilize it for learning and sharing.



Notes: ► Integration of | → Results in

Figure 1. Proposed framework showing process of learners undergoing the stages in learning using online visual media platforms

Conclusions

The development of critical review in this study of using online visual media platforms for English language learning provided two implications. The first implication is the study agreements, and the second implication is the study gaps. The articles critically reviewed in this paper agrees that the use of online visual media plays a role in learners' motivation, participations, skill assessment and creating a collaborated learning zone. Moreover, the reviewed articles also concur that the use of online visual media platforms in the learning process complies with modern needs and profiles of learners. The research gap shown from this study can be observed through the lack of studies that solely focus on the Canva platform, as modern technologies are known to develop a large amount of software with identical functions, features and uses. This demagnifies the search for single use of online visual media platforms as various learners incorporate different platforms as they differ in learning styles and environment. Moreover, as the grey shaded cell in the country column showed in Table 2, only one study was found which was carried out in Malaysia. Also, it was found that not only were the there scarce amount of study on the themes in more respected journals such as Scopus, but there were also a scarce amount of recent study on the themes available on the Google database. Thus, future work shall include the utilization of the Canva Online Visual Media Platform which will be referred by researchers while researching the field of technology use for English language learning. To date, there were limited studies especially in respected publications such as Scopus or the Google Scholar databases as shown in Table 1 which explored the integration of visual media in English language learning. Further research is required, particularly the integration of the Canva platform in enhancing English language learning because the Canva platform is a crucial visual media to provide excellent English language learning experiences for learners.

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