Canva Platform: Visual Content for Developing Writing Skills of Prospective Engineers in ESP Classes

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Abstract—This article explores the integration of visual content technologies, with a specific focus on the Canva.com platform, to enhance the teaching of English for specific purposes (ESP) to prospective engineers. The primary goal of the authors was to investigate the effectiveness and benefits of using Canva.com for developing writing skills among prospective engineers through a mix of theoretical research and practical implementation in an educational setting. For this purpose, they implemented targeted activities via Canva.com, provided classroom observations, conducted a literature review, and administered a questionnaire survey with 50 engineering students, which helped to analyze students' work and demonstrate the impact Canva had on the development of students' writing abilities. Canva's user-friendly interface and visually appealing templates support the mastery of writing, covering various formats like resumes, cover letters, essays, and engineering blueprints. The article not only highlights the potential of Canva.com but goes further to present concrete examples of activities tailored for prospective engineers. Models of both individual visual storytelling and collaborative endeavours, exemplified by the "Evolution of Railway Technology" project, showcase the platform's versatility in facilitating engaging and educational experiences. In addition to these activities, the authors provide insightful assessment criteria and teaching tips, offering valuable guidance on effectively incorporating Canva.com into the classroom. By seamlessly integrating visuals into writing activities, the authors emphasize the transformative impact on prospective engineers, encouraging them to express ideas more effectively and imaginatively. The Canva.com platform emerges as a dynamic and indispensable tool in ESP classes, cultivating an environment that not only stimulates creativity but also provides structured templates that empower students to navigate the intricacies of writing with confidence. Consequently, the article advocates wholeheartedly for the effective integration of Canva.com in English language instruction for prospective engineers, presenting a compelling avenue to elevate both their writing skills and overall language proficiency.

Keywords—*Canva.com, enhanced learning, ESP classes, prospective engineers, visual content, writing skills.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of visual content in language learning of prospective specialists has gained significant attention in recent years. It has been recognized as an effective approach to engage learners, enhance their understanding, and promote their writing skills. One platform that offers a range of visual content creation tools is Canva.com.

The development of network interaction technologies enables the modernization of the educational process and makes learning open and accessible to all participants: students, teachers, and university administration.

However, there are still problems that need to be addressed. For example, most mobile application opportunities are still not researched enough by the teaching staff. That is why the question of studying the possibilities of using the services provided by the Canva.com platform for individual and group work during ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes becomes particularly relevant.

The question of implementing computer technologies in English language education of prospective specialists has been explored in the works of Blake, Dmitrenko et al., Gilakjani et al., Hidayat et al. [1] – [4], and others. It is emphasized that their usage contributes to improving learning, enhancing students' cognitive activity, and developing information culture. Lailiyah and Cahyono study the possibilities of applying cloud technologies and network interaction in language-enhanced education, Zhang, Zilka, et al. (2019) [5] – [7], and others.

Canva.com is a versatile online platform that provides users with access to a wide array of design templates, graphics, images, and fonts. It offers a user-friendly interface, making it accessible to both teachers and students. According to Anwar's research [8], it was found that the Canva application can be used for various learning purposes, allowing users to create a wide range of materials to support learning goals. According to a study conducted by Al Khoeri et al. [9], Canva.com is a graphic design application that effectively assists students in designing a variety of creative ESP materials online. The use of Canva in this study also is applied in the form of creating an infographic containing blog content. Given blog also can be used as media to facilitate students to practice writing [10].

One of the main advantages of Canva.com is its ability to stimulate students' creativity and imagination [11]. It allows users to design visually captivating presentations, infographics, posters, and other materials that can be used to support writing activities [12]. By incorporating eye-catching visuals, students are motivated to express their thoughts and ideas more effectively in writing [13].

With the help of the service, teachers can create a virtual classroom, educational presentations, infographics, tables, flashcards, lesson plans, and more [14] in ESP classes. Mastering writing skills in English is a priority for many students in higher education institutions, as they need to learn to express their thoughts in the professional sphere clearly and concisely [15]. Writing is considered a fundamental academic skill and is often considered the most challenging to acquire compared to reading, listening, and speaking. Naturally, students with good writing skills are more successful at expressing their ideas and achieving their goals in enhanced learning. Therefore, developing writing skills brings multiple benefits and contributes to success in life [16].

According to works of Melinia and Nugroho, Nurhidayat, Santiana et al., Suhartono and Laraswati [17] – [20], in enhanced learning writing by means of Canva.com, a specific vocabulary range, grammar, and the ability to organize and develop ideas are required. Ready-made templates for comics (storytelling) help students clearly visualize the development of a plot and think about what to write. These templates provide a structured framework that assists students in planning their writing and ensuring coherence in their storytelling. By utilizing such templates, students can enhance their ability to organize their ideas effectively and present them sequentially and engagingly.

Furthermore, Canva.com offers various templates specifically designed for educational purposes. These templates can be customized to suit specific writing tasks, such as creating resumes, cover letters, essays, or storyboards. Students can choose from a wide range of designs and layouts, making the process of writing more engaging and enjoyable.

However, the use of the Canva.com platform for educational purposes remains on the periphery of scientific research, which has prompted the relevance of our study. Therefore, *the study aims* to highlight the features of using the Canva.com platform for developing the writing skills of prospective engineers in ESP classes.

II. Materials and Methods

To investigate the effectiveness of Canva.com in developing writing skills for prospective engineers in ESP classes, a mixed-methods approach was employed. The study involved a comprehensive literature review to establish the theoretical foundation and identify existing research in the field of technology-enhanced language learning and visual content creation tools.

The primary data collection methods included a questionnaire survey titled "Benefits of Using Canva.com to Develop Writing Skills in ESP Classes," administered to 50 students from the "Engineering" educational program at the Ukrainian State University of Railway Transport. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions, enabling participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and suggestions regarding the use of Canva.com in developing writing skills.

Additionally, the researchers implemented targeted writing activities and projects on the Canva.com platform in their ESP classes over two semesters of the 2022-2023 academic year. These activities focused on visual storytelling, collaborative writing endeavors, and creating visually appealing content such as resumes, cover letters, essays, and engineering blueprints. Classroom observations and analysis of student work produced using Canva.com were conducted to assess the impact on writing skills, creativity, and overall language proficiency.

Example of Visual Storytelling activity via Canva.com:

Objective: Develop narrative writing skills and creativity through visual storytelling using Canva.com.

Instructions: 1) Divide the students into pairs or small groups. 2) Explain to the students that they will create a visual story using Canva.com. 3) Provide them with the following guidelines: a. Choose a specific theme or setting for their story (e.g., a haunted house, a futuristic city, etc.). b. Create a storyboard with a sequence of events using Canva presentation templates or custom-sized designs. c. Each group member should contribute to the story by writing a different part of the narrative (e.g., introduction,

conflict, resolution). d. Incorporate visuals, such as images, illustrations, and icons, from Canva's extensive library to enhance the storytelling. e. Pay attention to the coherence and flow of the story, ensuring that each part connects smoothly. f. Write descriptive and engaging text for each scene, using dialogue, action, and sensory details to bring the story to life. g. Experiment with different font styles, colors, and layouts to match the mood and tone of the story. 4) Allow time for the students to collaborate, plan, and create their visual stories on Canva.com. 5) Once the stories are complete, have each group present their visual story to the class. 6) Encourage the students to narrate their stories, explaining the sequence of events and the characters' actions and emotions. 7) Facilitate a discussion after each presentation, asking the class to provide feedback and share their interpretations of the stories.

Conclude the activity by discussing the importance of visual elements in storytelling and how they can enhance the overall impact of a narrative.

The teacher can modify this activity by adjusting the complexity of the storytelling task or incorporating specific language targets, such as using descriptive adjectives, past tense verbs, or conditional sentences. Canva.com's design features and templates offer a creative platform for students to develop their narrative writing skills while integrating visually appealing elements into their stories. One tip is to use specific storytelling topics around which the characters of the stories can grapple with problems like: a) The origins of a particular field of engineering (e.g. civil, mechanical); b) The need for innovation to solve a practical problem; c) How early engineers developed solutions with simple tools and materials; d) The evolution of an engineering wonder (e.g. steam engine, bridge design) through different historical periods; e) How pioneering engineers contributed to major innovations that impacted society.

By centering the narratives around these engineering-related issues, teachers can provide more meaningful contexts for students to apply their expanding English proficiency. The storytelling process will engage their imagination to devise plot lines and technical solutions, while also learning new vocabulary and structures. With Canva's multimedia options, the next generation of engineers can express their creativity visually. Another important thing that the teachers have to think about is assessment. When they assess students' visual storytelling writing activity created through Canva.com in an English language class, the teachers should consider the following assessment criteria: 1) Evaluate the organization and coherence of the visual story. Assess if the story has a clear beginning, middle, and conclusion and if the sequence of events is logical and well-developed. 2) Assess the language proficiency demonstrated in the written content of the visual story. Evaluate the accuracy and appropriateness of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and overall language fluency. 3) Evaluate the level of creativity and originality demonstrated in visual storytelling. 4) Assess the visual appeal and aesthetic quality of the Canva design. 5) Evaluate how well students followed the guidelines, requirements, and themes or prompts. Assess if the visual story reflects the assigned topic, demonstrates an understanding of the

storytelling objective, and meets the length or content requirements specified. 6) Assess the overall engagement and impact of the visual story. Consider if the story effectively engages the viewer, elicits an emotional response, and effectively communicates the intended message or theme. 7) Assess the use of descriptive language, dialogues, figurative expressions, and other creative language techniques to enhance the storytelling experience. 8) If students are required to present their visual stories, assess their presentation skills, including clarity of speech, confidence, and ability to effectively communicate the story to the audience. 9) Encourage students to reflect on their work and provide a self-assessment of their strengths, areas for improvement, and the challenges they encountered during the visual storytelling process. Consider their ability to analyze and evaluate their work.

Provide prospective engineers with clear assessment criteria before they begin the visual storytelling activity, so they understand the expectations and can self-assess their work. Offer constructive feedback to guide their improvement and highlight areas where they have excelled.

Another valuable feature of Canva.com is collaboration. It allows prospective engineers to work together on group projects or peer editing activities. They can share their designs, provide feedback, and collaborate in real-time, fostering a sense of teamwork and encouraging the development of writing skills through effective communication.

Collaborative writing: Canva's collaborative features enable prospective engineers to work together on writing projects in real-time, allowing them to share ideas, critique each other's work, and learn from each other's writing styles.

For example, the teacher can use the activity "Green Building Technologies", "Solar-Powered Community", "Evolution of Railway Technology" or "Bridge Design Evolution" – groups detail the historical development of an aspect like suspension, beam, arch, or truss bridges. Students use images, charts, and factual accounts to compare milestone innovations that drastically increased spans and load-bearing abilities over time. Instructors allow time for the students to explore Canva.com's design tools and templates, providing support and guidance as needed.

A. Sample

Topic: Evolution of Railway Technology

Objective: Develop technical writing and visual communication skills by creating an animated timeline documenting key innovations in railway history.

Instructions:

Divide students into groups, and assign each a period (e.g. Early Railways, Golden Age Steam Locomotives, Diesel Transition, High-Speed Rail).

Using Canva, create an animated multi-page timeline template.

Guide students to include:

Iconic images, patent diagrams, and maps

Fact boxes on milestone inventions (e.g. track gauges, air brakes)

Quotes/anecdotes about pioneering engineers

Descriptions of how technologies enabled longer routes, higher speeds, and capacities

Sections on iconic locomotives and infrastructure projects

Comparative charts showing the evolution

Taglines/headers conveying the theme of that era

Encourage a cohesive visual narrative across groups documenting the rapid progress of railways.

Have groups present their section and its significance in the broader timeline to the class.

This ties in historical and technical knowledge with the multi-modal communication skills expected of engineers. The roles and innovations frame an engaging storyline for language learning.

Encourage class discussion and interaction, allowing students to ask questions and share their thoughts about the different destinations.

Conclude the activity by reflecting on the importance of descriptive writing in promoting travel destinations and how visual elements can enhance written communication. The instructor can adapt this activity by choosing different topics or objectives, such as creating persuasive advertisements, designing informative posters, or developing storyboards for short narratives. Canva.com offers a wide range of templates and tools to support various writing activities in an engaging and visually appealing way.

B. Participants

The presented method of teaching storytelling by means of Canva was implemented in the education process in order to improve English writing skills of prospective engineers in Ukrainian State University of Railway Transport (Ukraine). The researchers selected a representative sample of university students engaged in remote online learning to ensure the study's findings could be generalized to a broader population. 50 students from the educational program "Engineering" participated in it during two semesters of 2022-2023 academic year.

C. Procedure

At the end of the second semester in order to investigate the students' perception towards the use of Canva in improving writing skills, the questionnaire "Benefits of Using Canva.com to Develop Writing Skills in ESP Classes" was conducted. These instruments included Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions, enabling participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and suggestions in-depth.

The participants of the study were informed about the purpose and the structure of the questionnaire and assured that their names would not be used in the study reports.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preferably After analyzing the results of the questionnaire, it was discovered that prospective engineers perceived Canva as an effective means of support in developing writing skills in ESP classes (table 1).

TABLE 1. BENEFITS OF USING CANVA.COM TO DEVELOP WRITING SKILLS IN ESP CLASSES

No	Benefits of Canva.com	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1	a visually engaging platform that captures students' attention	18	76	4	2
2	a visually engaging platform that stimulates students 'creativity	12	72	12	4
3	Canva motivates to express ideas more effectively and imaginatively	8	74	14	4
4	Canva offers various design templates and tools that enable students to create visual stories	16	76	4	4
5	Canva helps learners develop their skills in interpreting and creating visual information, which is essential in their professional context	10	76	10	4
6	Canva stimulates collaborative writing projects	12	74	10	4
7	Canva simulates real-world design scenarios	10	74	12	4
8	Canva helps to convey complex ideas concisely	10	72	14	4
9	Canva helps to select appropriate visuals to support writing and engage the audience through effective visual representations.	16	78	4	2

According to the results of the questionnaire, it can be stated that using Canva.com to develop writing skills in ESP classes offers numerous benefits. Canva.com provides a visually engaging platform that captures prospective engineers' attention and stimulates their creativity. By incorporating visuals into writing activities, students are motivated to express their ideas more effectively and imaginatively. Canva.com offers various design templates and tools that enable students to create visual stories. This allows them to develop narrative writing skills, practice structuring their ideas, and convey their thoughts in a compelling and engaging manner.

Through writing captions, dialogues, or descriptions in their designs, students can reinforce vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, thereby improving their overall language proficiency. Visual storytelling using

Canva.com helps prospective engineers develop visual communication skills, which are vital in various professional and academic contexts. They learn to convey complex ideas concisely, select appropriate visuals to support their writing, and engage the audience through effective visual representations.

Thus, analyzing the scientific studies devoted to the use of Canva.com in the English language enhanced learning [1] – [20], as well as taking into account the authors' experience of applying Canva.com in the process of teaching English writing, it is considered to provide some teaching tips for using Canva.com for ESP classes for prospective engineers:

1. Begin by providing a brief overview of Canva.com and its features to familiarize students with the platform. Demonstrate how to navigate the website and access the various design tools and templates.

2. Break down the process of using Canva.com into clear and manageable steps. Provide instructions and demonstrate each step to ensure prospective engineers understand how to create their visual content effectively.

3. Share model examples created using Canva.com to inspire prospective engineers and give them an idea of what they can create. Show them different design options, layouts, and color schemes to encourage creativity and experimentation.

4. Emphasize the importance of planning before diving into the design process. Encourage prospective engineers to brainstorm ideas, outline their content, and gather relevant materials (such as images or text) before starting their Canva project. This will help them stay organized and focused throughout the design process.

5. Incorporate language learning objectives. For example, if the focus is on vocabulary expansion, encourage prospective engineers to include target words in their designs. If the aim is to practice writing skills, guide students to write descriptive captions or engaging text to accompany their visual content.

6. Promote peer collaboration by encouraging prospective engineers to work together or provide feedback on each other's designs. This can enhance teamwork, foster language practice, and encourage creativity as students share ideas and perspectives.

7. Create opportunities for prospective engineers to showcase their Canva creations. Display their designs in the classroom, share them digitally, or organize a presentation session where students explain their design choices and the content they created. Celebrate their efforts and provide constructive feedback to support their growth.

8. After completing the Canva activity, have prospective engineers reflect on their learning experience. Ask them to evaluate their designs, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and share what they have learned about visual communication and language use through the process.

9. Encourage prospective engineers to explore other digital design tools and platforms similar to Canva.com.

This will allow them to broaden their digital literacy skills and provide alternative options for visual content creation.

10. Remember to adapt these tips to fit the specific needs and proficiency level of prospective engineers in ESP classes. By incorporating Canva.com into your ESP classes, the teacher can engage students, foster creativity, and provide them with valuable language practice opportunities in a visually appealing context.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Canva.com facilitates collaborative learning by allowing prospective engineers to work together on design projects and simulate real-world design scenarios, helping students understand how visuals are used for communication and persuasion in various industries and professions. This exposure prepares them for future academic and professional endeavors.

The targeted activities presented in this study, such as visual storytelling, collaborative writing projects, and the creation of visually appealing content like resumes, cover letters, essays, and engineering blueprints, have demonstrated the versatility and effectiveness of Canva.com in enhancing writing skills.

By incorporating Canva.com into ESP classes, educators can provide a dynamic and engaging environment for prospective engineers to develop their writing skills. The platform's visual nature enhances creativity, promotes language practice, and equips students with valuable digital literacy and visual communication skills that are essential in today's globalized world.

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