



JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF DIGITAL TASK-BASED LEARNING FOR ENHANCING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILLS

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Accepted :

10 November 2024

Published :

10 January 2025

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ABSTRACT

This study explores students' perceptions of task-based digital learning using Padlet to enhance descriptive writing skills. Conducted in a Catholic private school in West Java, the qualitative research involved six seventh-grade English as a second language learners (three high-scoring and three low-scoring) selected from a class of 22 students. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews after students completed descriptive writing tasks on Padlet. Findings revealed positive perceptions of Padlet's multimedia tools, with students acknowledging that features such as images, videos, and GIFs improved their ability to write descriptively and organize ideas. Students also highlighted enhanced interaction and collaboration during tasks. Despite the benefits, some challenges in using Padlet were noted. The study contributes to educational technology and language learning by showcasing Padlet's potential to foster creativity, collaboration, and multimedia integration in writing tasks. It provides valuable insights for K-12 and higher education curriculum design, teacher training programs, and the development of user-friendly digital learning tools.

Keywords: *Perceptions, Digital Task-Based Learning, Descriptive, Writing Skills.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Descriptive writing is essential for learners as it enables them to express ideas, emotions, and details vividly. However, many students face challenges in writing, including generating ideas, organizing topics, and applying proper grammar and vocabulary (Graham & Perin, 2007; Lesiana et al., 2023). These issues are particularly evident among Indonesian students, reflecting a broader concern within the nation's education system. Suncaka (2023) highlights that the low quality of education in Indonesia remains a pressing problem, with traditional teaching methods being a significant contributing factor. To address these challenges, educators are actively exploring effective strategies

to improve students' writing skills. One such promising approach is the Digital Task-Based Learning method, which has proven effective in enhancing writing skills for English language learners by emphasizing the application of language skills in meaningful contexts.

In recent years, digital learning has gained significant attention as an effective approach to enhancing various language skills. Incorporating technology into education also helps students stay engaged and motivated. Huang and Sun (2023) argue in their study that incorporating technology with language education significantly boosts student engagement and creates tailored learning experiences,

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enabling learners to enhance their language skills within relevant and contextualized settings. Technology plays a significant role in assisting TBLT (Lai & Li, 2011), it builds more elaborate tasks that have been proven to enhance students' language competence (Gilabert et al., 2009; Putri et al., 2023). Digital Task-Based Learning allows students to complete tasks using various tools and platforms, which enhances their creativity and problem-solving skills. This method encourages students to be engaged in the learning process, creating a more interactive and enjoyable experience.

This study focuses on digital task-based learning using one of the platforms, namely Padlet. Padlet is a free online application accessible on the web, it also has various tools that can be applied to students' writing tasks. Padlet supports the integration of multimedia, allowing students to share links, upload pictures or videos related to their tasks, and engage in peer feedback by commenting on each other's work. This feature encourages self-assessment and peer learning, which can significantly improve students' writing skills (Rashid, Yunus, & Wahi, 2019). Previous studies have proven that Padlet had impact on improving students' writing skills. The findings from Fauzul Etfita et al. (2022) indicate that Padlet is an effective tool that encourages student engagement in the classroom, fosters interaction among peers and instructors, facilitates collaborative group projects, and promotes self-directed learning. Supporting this statement, Awaludin et al. (2017) found that Padlet significantly enhanced college students' comprehension, leading to notable improvements in their writing performance. Additionally, Padlet is compatible with various devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones, or any device with internet access. Teachers can also benefit from Padlet's organizational capabilities, as it helps them efficiently manage and monitor students' tasks.

Considering these objectives, the present research examines the design of task-based digital learning using Padlet to bridge the existing research gap and to analyze students' perceptions of the approach. This research offers innovative task-based digital designs using Padlet, specifically tailored for ESL students, incorporating real-world writing tasks

that foster meaningful engagement. By using Padlet, this design allows students to practice writing in dynamic, interactive settings, providing teachers with practical strategies for improving students' writing proficiency in areas such as grammar, coherence, and vocabulary usage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW**Related Teaching Descriptive Writing in Junior High School**

Teaching English requires teachers to impart both knowledge and confidence to their students. English instruction aims to develop effective communication skills in both spoken and written forms (Windi & Suryaman, 2022). Teaching writing, however, presents unique challenges, as it requires mastery of various language components, including content, structure, word choice, grammar, and writing mechanics. As a productive skill, writing demands carefully planned strategies for successful learning. Brown (2001) highlights the teacher's crucial role in guiding students to transform their ideas into written words. Teachers must be meticulous in preparing lesson plans and selecting appropriate materials, activities, and resources.

Descriptive writing, a key component of junior high school English curricula, plays a significant role in developing students' expressive skills. According to Dardjito et al. (2021), descriptive writing helps students convey emotions and vivid imagery. Sudiana and Hidayati (2020) further note that teaching descriptive texts enhances students' vocabulary and grammar while fostering their ability to engage readers with creative descriptions. Although descriptive writing is complex and challenging for many students, it is introduced twice during junior high school, in seventh and ninth grades (Rusmawan, 2017).

To engage students effectively, teachers must adopt diverse instructional strategies. Techniques such as collaborative writing, peer review, and integrating multimedia resources can boost student motivation and participation (Sukma, 2015). Mustika et al. (2020) emphasize addressing students' struggles with descriptive texts by providing clear guidelines

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and examples to improve their understanding of the genre.

The Integration of Digital Tools in Task-Based Learning for Junior High School

The use of digital platforms in education has transformed task-based learning, leading to the development of digital task-based learning (DTBL). According to Stockwell & Hubbard (2013), digital tools enhance TBL by equipping students with multimedia resources, interactive assignments, and real-time feedback. These tools can make tasks more engaging and relevant to students' digital experiences, which is particularly beneficial in promoting writing skills. For example, Yunus et al. (2019) found that using digital platforms, highlighting Padlet and Edmodo for task-based learning increased student motivation and creativity, particularly in tasks that required them to write descriptively. Moreover, incorporating digital platforms into task-based learning showed to be effectively capture students' interest due to the websites' engaging and visually appealing design.

Teaching English as a second language using a digital task-based learning model also allowed students to learn a real-world language. This model enriches students' vocabulary knowledge in collaborative tasks (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014). Shrooten (2006) framework emphasizes that integrating technology in a task-based learning model offers numerous benefits for students, including personalizing lessons, stimulating, and engaging students. Along with these benefits, in DTBL, teachers' roles become the facilitators of the lesson process. Students with teachers' help, seek their comprehension of the English language concept. Furthermore, integrating technology minimizes the challenges of time constraints and physical limitations in the classroom environment (Lai & Li, 2011).

Despite the advantages of integrating digital tools into TBL, some challenges arise, such as students' varying levels of digital literacy and access to technology. Challenges also arise within the Indonesian EFL teachers, in combining technology, pedagogy, and local context in their instruction, as standardized testing and textbook dependency remain

prevalent (Kristiawan et al., 2022). Additionally, while many studies highlight the benefits of using digital tools for general language learning, fewer explore their specific impact on junior high school students' descriptive writing abilities. This study goals to fill that gap through studying in what manner students perceive digital platforms for enhancing their descriptive writing skills.

Padlet in Teaching Writing Skills

Technology is developing rapidly, and a lot of its features be used to teach English second language. Technology has also been found to have a big impact on students' language acquisition. According to Grégoire (1996), integrating technology into teaching methods are essential for promoting active learning and enhancing students' creativity and resourcefulness. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is one of the top loved learning media. MALL involves using mobile technology for language learning, especially when the portability of these devices offers unique benefits (Novianto, 2022). Among the various types of combined MALL platforms, Padlet is one that is specifically designed for the writing genre.

Padlet is an outstanding platform to be integrated into the language learning process (Reka & Maria, 2018). Padlet provides features where users can use interactive media components to improve their writing while arguing about given topics (Algraini, 2014). Furthermore, Padlet offers a variety of features that make it a flexible tool for collaborative and interactive learning. It has many features such as collaborative boards, customizable layouts, real-time updates, multimedia support, commenting and reactions, organizational tools, and even export options. These features can assist students in throwing their ideas descriptively. Deni and Zainal (2018) point out that students and teachers are able to make collaborative boards adjustable with the topics learned in Padlet. Moreover, the collaborative boards are also displayed attractively.

Prior studies on the impact of using Padlet have shown that it significantly enhances students' writing skills, contributing positively to their overall writing performance. According to Awaludin, Abd Karim, and Mohd Saad (2017), Padlet is believed to

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encourage students to enhance their writing skills despite their circumstances. Based on Suryani & Daulay's (2022) Padlet studies results indicate that writing quality has improved in areas such as vocabulary mastery, functionality, grammar, structure, and coherence. Etfita et al. (2022), also found that Padlet has numerous benefits in the lesson process, through the application, students have the flexibility to learn anytime and anywhere, and they can also learn collaboratively.

Like the current study, Lee and Kim (2021) explored the use of digital platforms, including collaborative tools like Google Docs, and found that such tools encouraged active participation and peer feedback, which enhanced students' writing skills. Prior research has demonstrated the potential of digital tools to support writing activities by fostering collaboration and creativity. However, there is limited research on how Padlet, a user-friendly digital platform, can specifically foster descriptive writing skills among junior high school students. Most studies have focused on general writing tasks or narrative writing, leaving a gap in understanding its impact on descriptive writing in the EFL context.

This study seeks to explore how Padlet, as part of digital task-based learning (DTBL), can enhance students' descriptive writing skills by leveraging its features for brainstorming, organizing ideas, and collaborative feedback. Additionally, it investigates students' perceptions of using Padlet for writing activities and its impact on their participations and motivation in writing tasks.

Therefore, this study tries to give solutions for the following problem:

1. What are junior high school students' perceptions of using Padlet in digital task-based learning for descriptive writing?

3. METHODS

Participants and Context

This study involved seventh-grade students from a junior high school in East Java, selected through purposive sampling to ensure participants had relevant experience with Padlet. Of the 22 students in the class, six (three high-scoring and three

low-scoring) were chosen for face-to-face interviews, representing diverse academic performance. Students attended 80-minute English classes twice a week.

Ethics and Initial Contact

The research process began with obtaining permission from the headmaster and introducing the study to the students in understandable terms. To maintain privacy, any visual documentation of students blurred their faces, and those uncomfortable being documented were excluded.

Instructional Procedures

The study spanned two weeks with four sessions. In the first week, students learned descriptive writing through teacher-guided instruction, group discussions, and collaborative writing tasks using Padlet. In the second week, they individually wrote descriptive texts on "My Lovely Home" using Padlet, supported by scaffolding and peer feedback. This approach emphasized creativity, interaction, and critical thinking.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through face-to-face interviews with six selected students, supported by classroom observations and documentation, including photographs, videos, and students' written texts. Triangulation ensured consistent findings by cross-referencing data sources.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) framework: condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. Themes were identified from interview transcripts, categorized, and displayed in matrices and charts. Observations and documentation were also analyzed to identify patterns in Padlet's impact on writing skills. Triangulation validated the findings, highlighting Padlet's role in enhancing descriptive writing and student engagement.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the interview questions, we identified three patterns in the answers: Padlet multimedia integration, students' engagement and interaction,

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students' perception towards Padlet for descriptive writing task, and challenges in utilizing Padlet.

Padlet multimedia integration

One of the most notable features of Padlet is its multimedia integration. With this feature, students can attach images related to their ideas in their writing. During the lesson, students were instructed to look for images first before starting to write their descriptive text. Most students highlighted that multimedia tools (images, videos, GIFs) helped them write descriptively and organize ideas. According to this, a student gave statement that show her perspective towards the multimedia integration:

"It really kind a, advantages, cause I, I can see like refrences, so what I gonna write for, so I can see like images, I'm gonna like, oh look I'm gonna use this image, I'm gonna use this drawing or this picture. So, yeah.." (Student C, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

The multimedia tools available on Padlet have been shown to enhance students' engagement and creativity in writing significantly. Features such as images, GIFs, videos, and links provide students with dynamic ways to express their ideas and enrich their written content. Student C agreed that these tools help create a more interactive and visually appealing writing process, allowing students to connect their thoughts to concrete visuals or references. More students found these multimedia features particularly helpful in brainstorming ideas, organizing their thoughts, and making their writing more descriptive and engaging.

Research from Rashid et al. (2019) reported that Padlet's functionality, similar to sticky notes, allowed users to post words, links, images, and videos on a virtual wall. This feature enabled students to engage in collaborative writing activities, view and assess peers' responses, and receive immediate feedback to enhance their writing skills. Some students shared their perspectives on this statement:

T: How did the ability to use multimedia tools on Padlet (e.g., images, videos, links) enhance your engagement and creativity in writing?

S: Um....

T: Do you think it increases your creativity when writing?

S: Yes, because... because...

T: because you can see images at the same time?

S: Yes.

(Student E, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

Another student also stated:

T: How did the ability to use multimedia tools on Padlet (e.g., images, videos, links) enhance your engagement and creativity in writing?

S: huh? Pardon me?

T: So using multimedia tools, like pictures and so on, what do you think? Can it increase your creativity in writing or not?

S: Yes.

T: Why?

S: Because it makes writing easier.

T: So you have more visuals when writing?

S: Yes.

(Student A, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

Both students, Student E and Student A, strongly agree that the multimedia features available on Padlet can significantly enhance their writing process. They believe that the integration of various multimedia features has a positive impact in simplifying the writing task. By incorporating these elements, they are able to create a more comprehensive representation of their ideas, which allows for clearer visualization of their thoughts. This visual support not only helps in organizing their ideas more effectively but also serves as a source of inspiration, sparking creativity as they work on their descriptive texts.

As a conclusion, students found that the multimedia integration on Padlet significantly enhanced their writing process by providing clearer visualizations of their ideas and helping them organize their thoughts more effectively. This feature made the platform a valuable tool for improving their overall descriptive writing experience and fostering better creativity and structure in their work.

Students' engagement and interaction

Padlet encouraged collaboration and interaction among students, which helped increase their engagement in writing activities. In the research, students were assigned to comment on and provide feedback on their friends' posts. Each student was required to give feedback on two friends' tasks. To help students understand how to comment effectively, the teacher first provided examples as a guide. This ensured that students were not confused about how to give constructive feedback on their peers' posts.

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Later, students were required to create a descriptive text based on the feedback they received from their friends

Students expressed enjoyment in sharing their posts and receiving feedback from their peers, as noted by one of the students:

T: How did you feel about collaborating with your classmates on Padlet? Can you share specific moments that felt impactful?

S: It feels good to be able to share information with friends.

T: Try to give certain memorable moments when using Padlet with friends

S: Eh.. we can discuss, like oh what's suitable for this, like describing pictures with friends

(Student D, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

The interview results revealed that students felt happy about sharing information with their friends. Padlet was designed to promote student interaction, and the responses demonstrated how it successfully encouraged both online and offline engagement. One student stated, "It feels good to be able to share information with friends," highlighting their enjoyment in sharing posts and reading their friends' posts on related topics. This interaction allowed students to exchange information effectively. These findings align with the benefits of incorporating digital tools like Padlet in education, as they foster interactive and engaging environments that effectively support students' learning outcomes (Wahyuni, 2023).

Another student shared, "Eh.. we can discuss, like oh what's suitable for this, like describing pictures with friends," indicating that while completing tasks, they also engaged in discussions with peers, representing offline interactions. These responses show that Padlet not only facilitated meaningful collaboration but also fostered happiness and satisfaction among students through the interactions they experienced.

Padlet collaborative setting not only promoted active participation but also fostered feeling of togetherness, enriching the writing progress. Although students encountered occasional technical difficulties, such as system lags and challenges in navigation, they generally valued these collaborative interactions for their motivational impact. This aligns with findings from Anderson and Macleroy (2017), which highlight the function of

collaborative digital media in creating engaging, dynamic, and inclusive learning environments.

Students' perception towards Padlet for descriptive writing task

The analysis of students' feedback indicates that Padlet is generally a positive tool for enhancing writing tasks, with its effectiveness rooted in its multimedia capabilities and collaborative environment. Many appreciated its visual and interactive features that made writing more enjoyable. For instance, a student remarked on the platform's creative flexibility, stating:

"To be honest, for my first impression of Padlet. I think it was a pretty good, I can like add some gifs. It was really cute, I like it." (Student C, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

Student C highlighted that Padlet allowed her to add "gifs and images," making the experience "really cute" and enjoyable. This statement can be interpreted as evidence that Padlet's appealing features can enhance students' interest and motivation in writing. Other students (Students B, D, E) also had the same perceptions, as they thought, Padlet was a fun and engaging platform. This aligns with Lestari (2016), who found that Padlet positively impacts students' motivation and the quality of their writing. Similarly, another student appreciated the ability to personalize posts with background designs, despite he found the platform challenging to navigate:

T: Try to describe your first impression of using Padlet for a writing assignment

S: At first it was confusing because I had never used Padlet before, because it was also confusing.

T: Then what stood out to you?

S: Uh.. the picture and the writing, and the decoration behind it and the background.

(Student D, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

The student gave a positive impression of using Padlet for their writing task, though the student initially found the platform challenging to navigate. This aligns with the broader understanding that tools with customizable features can enhance learner engagement. With all of the visual and interactive features, students find Padlet can engage their descriptive writing skill. Like the students bellow:

"Oh I think, it kinda like enhances my writing ability. Cause like I never use like writing grammar stuff. I usually, like talking, and not really like writing. Except like, DMing me, massaging me.

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So, that's why sometimes, I tryna not use like slang words. I don't know why I use words like skibidi, so yeah, hahahaha." (Student C, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

Interview from another student also stated:

T: In what ways do you think using Padlet helped you improve your descriptive writing skills, such as organizing ideas or choosing vocabulary?

S: um... from the picture

T: So if there is a picture, what can it help you with?

S: It can help me understand

T: So you can write while looking at the picture?

S: Yes

(Student F, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

The interviews reveal that both students found Padlet to be an effective tool for enhancing their descriptive writing skills. Student D specifically emphasized how Padlet helped them refine their ability to structure sentences formally and choose appropriate vocabulary, enabling them to produce more polished and professional writing. They appreciated the opportunity to practice using proper grammar rules in a way that felt interactive and engaging.

Meanwhile, student F highlighted the practical benefits of Padlet's features, particularly the picture attachment tool, which helped them visualize and describe objects more effectively. This feature allowed them to focus on generating ideas and organizing their thoughts while writing, which aligns with Affendi et al. (2020), who found that the image features significantly helped students arrange their ideas during the pre-writing stage. By providing a visual reference, Padlet supported their ability to develop descriptions with greater clarity and detail, even for those who found writing challenging.

Overall, these findings suggest that Padlet serves as a versatile platform that accommodates students of varying skill levels. It engages students in practicing their writing, encourages adherence to proper grammar and language rules, and supports creative expression. Padlet's features appear to provide both scaffolding for struggling writers and opportunities for advanced students to further enhance their skills.

In summary, students shared positive perspectives on Padlet that can enhance their descriptive writing. This verifies the result from a study by Mahmud (2019), that also found student

gave positive perception towards Padlet in descriptive writing skill. Students highlighted its various features and appealing appearance, which made the platform engaging and enjoyable to use. These aspects motivated students to actively practice and improve their descriptive writing abilities, demonstrating Padlet's effectiveness as a supportive learning tool.

Challenges in utilizing Padlet

While many students found Padlet to be an engaging and interactive platform for learning, some also faced difficulties in using it effectively. These challenges were particularly evident in their statements, like one below:

T: What challenges did you experience while using Padlet, and how did you try to overcome them?

S: Ee.. can't send

T: can't send pictures huh?

S: Yes

T: So the pictures sometimes don't appear?

S: Yes

T: Then how do you fix it?

S: Ask Miss Ivon.

(Student A, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

Another result from the interview also revealed:

T: What challenges did you experience while using Padlet, and how did you try to overcome them?

S: Sending and looking for the picture is a bit slow.

Q: So how do you solve it?

S: Just stay patient, if you're lagging like that, just be patient.

(Student E, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

Both students, Student A and Student E, identified the internet connection as the most significant factor contributing to their difficulties when using Padlet. As they acknowledged, utilizing technology for educational purposes requires a reliable and strong internet connection capable of supporting all students effectively. Unfortunately, this challenge often arises when integrating technology into the learning process. Student A suggested that this issue could be alleviated by seeking assistance from the teacher, particularly when the connection slows down or becomes unstable. They believe that teacher support can help

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ensure the lesson continues smoothly, even in facing technological problems. This align with Fuchs (2014) suggestion, that teachers who planning to use Padlet in the future should be prepared to address technical issues, manage challenges associated with using the platform for large classes, and provide effective feedback.

On the other hand, Student E proposed that patience is key when dealing with internet-related issues. They emphasized that waiting for the connection to stabilize and continuing the task without getting frustrated could help resolve the problem over time. Both students agreed that while the internet connection poses a challenge, these strategies—seeking teacher assistance or practicing patience—can make the experience more manageable and less disruptive to their learning.

Some students also faced challenges in utilizing Padlet's features, as illustrated in the statement below:

"Challenges, it was like, figuring out how to, eh... the mechanics, like adding pictures and stuff. I had to figure it out myself, trying all the little things. So yeah, that's really it." (Student C, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

In such cases, students often resorted to solving the problem independently. They explored the platform by experimenting with each feature to understand its function. This trial-and-error approach demonstrates their resilience and adaptability but also highlights the need for better instructional support to ease the learning process and enhance their experience with the platform.

In the other hand, there are also students who didn't find any challenges while utilizing Padlet:

T: What challenges did you experience while using Padlet, and how did you try to overcome them?

S: I don't know

T: Did you experience lag, couldn't insert images, or couldn't send them?

S: No

T: Does that mean there is no problem?

S: Yes

T: The wifi doesn't lag?

S: Yes

T: Can you insert images directly?

S: Yes

(Student F, interviewed on December 18, 2024)

This interaction illustrates that while some students encountered hurdles in navigating Padlet, others found the platform straightforward and encountered no technical difficulties. Such varied experiences emphasize the importance of understanding individual students' familiarity with technology to ensure equitable support and smooth usage of the platform for everyone.

In conclusion, while students expressed positive perspectives toward Padlet as a learning tool, they also faced certain challenges. The most commonly identified obstacles were issues with internet connectivity and difficulties in utilizing the platform's features. To address these challenges, students can either seek assistance from their teachers or independently explore and resolve the problems. Despite these setbacks, students agreed that Padlet's multimedia features provide valuable support in enhancing their writing experience, making it a beneficial addition to their learning process.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored junior high school students' perceptions of using Digital Task-Based Learning (DTBL) with Padlet to improve their descriptive writing skills. The results showed that students had a positive view of Padlet, particularly for its multimedia features that allowed them to add images and other visual aids. These features helped students generate ideas, organize their thoughts, and produce more vivid and detailed descriptive texts. Padlet also created an interactive and engaging environment, motivating students to work on their writing tasks. Collaboration played a significant role in the success of Padlet, as students engaged in peer feedback and discussions both online and offline. By the third and fourth sessions, many students became more independent in using Padlet, with some helping their peers navigate the platform. Both high- and low-achieving students found Padlet helpful—higher achievers appreciated the chance to refine grammar and structure, while lower achievers valued how it helped them visualize ideas and build confidence. In conclusion, the study found that Padlet effectively supported descriptive writing by promoting creativity, collaboration, and student engagement. Despite minor challenges, such as internet connectivity issues, students adapted well with the help of teachers. The platform's features encouraged dynamic interactions and enhanced motivation, making it a valuable tool for fostering a supportive and interactive digital learning environment.

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This study suggests that integrating tools like Padlet can be an effective approach to improving descriptive writing skills, particularly through collaborative and multimodal strategies. Future research should consider exploring Padlet's use for other writing genres, involve larger student samples for broader applicability, and provide specific teacher training to maximize the tool's effectiveness in classrooms. Additionally, research in environments with limited internet access can help assess Padlet's adaptability in such contexts.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author appreciates all those who assisted in this study. Special thanks to the management and staff of the Catholic Private School for providing access to the students and facilitating the research process. Sincere appreciation goes to the six participating students for their time, effort, and valuable insights that made this study possible. The author also extends gratitude to the supervisors for their guidance and support during the research. Lastly, the author is grateful to family, friends, and colleagues for their encouragement and support throughout the research journey.

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