
Integrating Canva And Similar Digital Design Tools In English Language Teaching: A Literature Review

Ni Putu Ritra Trees Ari Kartika Hadi Saraswati^{1*}, Ni Kadek Herna Lastari², I Wayan Sumerta Winaya Asnadi³

¹⁾ Business Administration, International Business Management, Politeknik Negeri Bali

²⁾ D4 Tourism Business Management, Politeknik Negeri Bali

³⁾ Master's Program in English Language Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

Email : ritrakartika@pnb.ac.id
hernalastari@pnb.ac.id
sumerta46wa@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas integrasi Canva dan alat desain digital serupa dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT). Kajian ini menyintesis penelitian tentang pembelajaran berbasis desain, digital storytelling, dan penggunaan alat bantu visual di kelas Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL), serta menyoroti manfaat pedagogis dan tantangan dalam penggunaan teknologi tersebut. Tinjauan ini menekankan peran Canva dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, kreativitas, dan keterampilan berbahasa melalui lingkungan pembelajaran yang interaktif dan kolaboratif. Secara metodologis, studi ini melakukan sintesis komprehensif terhadap penelitian empiris terbaru, kerangka teori, dan penerapan praktis yang berkaitan dengan alat desain digital dalam ELT. Temuan penelitian menekankan potensi transformatif dari Canva dan platform sejenis dalam mendorong kemandirian belajar, motivasi, dan keterampilan abad ke-21, sekaligus mengatasi tantangan teknologi dan pedagogis. Tinjauan ini berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan pengetahuan mengenai integrasi teknologi pendidikan dalam pengajaran bahasa dan memberikan rekomendasi bagi para pendidik serta peneliti.

Kata kunci: Canva, alat desain digital, pengajaran bahasa Inggris, alat bantu visual.

Abstract

This study discusses the integration of Canva and similar digital design tools in English Language Teaching (ELT). It synthesizes research on design-based learning, digital storytelling, and the use of visual aids in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, highlighting the pedagogical benefits and challenges of employing these technologies. The review emphasizes Canva's role in enhancing student engagement, creativity, and language skills through interactive and collaborative learning environments. Methodologically, this study conducts a comprehensive synthesis of recent empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and practical applications related to digital design tools in ELT. The findings underscore the transformative potential of Canva and comparable platforms in fostering learner autonomy, motivation, and 21st-century skills, while also addressing technological and pedagogical challenges. This review contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational technology integration in language teaching and offers recommendations for educators and researchers.

Keywords: Canva, digital design tools, English language teaching, visual aids

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology over recent decades has profoundly transformed educational practices across the globe (Kalyani, 2024), reshaping how knowledge is delivered, accessed, and absorbed. This transformation is especially evident in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), where digital innovations have opened up new avenues for both teachers and learners. The integration of digital tools into ELT has become not just beneficial but essential for creating learning environments that are dynamic, engaging, and effective. These tools facilitate interactive experiences that cater to diverse learning styles and needs, making language acquisition more accessible and enjoyable (Abduvalieva, 2025).

Among the myriad of digital resources available, Canva—a user-friendly, web-based graphic design platform—has emerged as a particularly versatile and powerful tool for educators

and students alike. Canva allows users to create visually appealing and customized educational materials, such as infographics, presentations, posters, and digital stories, without requiring advanced design skills. This accessibility empowers teachers to enhance their instructional methods and enables learners to express their understanding creatively. Canva and similar digital design tools offer innovative ways to enrich language learning by seamlessly combining visual creativity with pedagogical goals, thereby fostering deeper engagement and retention.

Visual and digital tools play a crucial role in language acquisition by supporting multiple facets of the learning process (Huseynova, 2024). They aid comprehension by providing contextual clues and visual representations that make abstract or complex language concepts more tangible. Additionally, these tools boost learner motivation by introducing variety and interactivity into lessons, which can counteract the monotony often associated with traditional language instruction. Furthermore, visual and digital resources contribute to cultural understanding by exposing learners to diverse perspectives and authentic materials (Yusupalieva, 2024), which are vital for developing communicative competence in a globalized world.

The use of such tools aligns closely with contemporary educational paradigms that emphasize learner-centered, interactive, and multimodal approaches. These paradigms recognize that effective learning occurs when students actively participate, collaborate, and engage with content through multiple sensory channels. Digital design tools like Canva support these approaches by enabling the creation of multimodal texts that integrate images, text, audio, and video, thus catering to varied learning preferences and promoting higher-order thinking skills (Rotunnaja et al., 2024).

This article aims to provide a comprehensive literature review on the integration of Canva and similar digital design tools in ELT, focusing on their educational benefits, challenges, and practical applications. By synthesizing findings from recent empirical studies, theoretical discussions, and practical reports, this review seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of how these tools can be effectively incorporated into English language classrooms to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Design-Based Learning (DBL) serves as a powerful pedagogical framework in language education by engaging learners in the creation and manipulation of digital content. This approach promotes deeper cognitive engagement by requiring students to apply language skills in meaningful, task-based contexts. By designing digital materials—such as posters, infographics, or presentations—learners not only practice vocabulary and grammar but also develop higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. DBL fosters a learner-centered environment where creativity and problem-solving are at the forefront, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning while integrating language development with digital competencies.

Digital storytelling has emerged as an effective pedagogical strategy that integrates language learning with digital literacy. Through the process of constructing and sharing multimedia narratives, learners engage with language in a personally meaningful way, which enhances motivation and retention. This method encourages the development of multiple language skills—including reading, writing, speaking, and listening—while simultaneously teaching learners how to use technology to express ideas. By combining text, images, audio, and video, digital storytelling empowers students to become both creators and communicators, enabling a deeper connection to the target language and fostering 21st-century communication skills.

Visual aids play a critical role in enhancing engagement and comprehension among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The use of images, diagrams, and visual organizers helps students to contextualize and retain new vocabulary, understand complex grammatical structures, and improve their overall communicative competence. Visual stimuli can bridge language gaps by providing concrete references that support meaning-making, particularly for visual learners or those with limited language exposure. Moreover, incorporating visuals into lessons can make

content more accessible, reduce cognitive overload, and increase student motivation by making learning more dynamic and interactive.

Canva contributes significantly to English Language Teaching (ELT) by offering an accessible, user-friendly platform that fosters creativity, collaboration, and learner autonomy. Its intuitive design tools allow students to produce visually appealing materials that support language practice in authentic contexts, such as brochures, digital posters, or multimedia presentations. Canva's collaborative features encourage peer interaction and teamwork, enhancing both language use and social skills. Furthermore, by allowing learners to customize their work, Canva supports differentiated instruction and personalized learning experiences, making it an effective tool for motivating students and promoting deeper engagement in language learning.

Through this comprehensive review, educators, researchers, and curriculum designers will gain valuable insights into the potential of digital design tools to transform English language teaching, equipping learners with the skills and confidence needed to thrive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

RESEARCH METHODS

This literature review employed a comprehensive synthesis approach to examine the integration of Canva and similar digital design tools in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Gao et al., 2023). Relevant studies were identified through systematic searches of academic databases including ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The search strategy utilized keywords such as "Canva," "digital design tools," "English language teaching," "digital storytelling," "design-based learning," and "visual aids in EFL." Inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed empirical studies, theoretical papers, and practical application reports published within the last ten years, focusing on the use of digital design tools in ELT contexts. Studies not directly related to language teaching or those lacking sufficient methodological rigor were excluded.

The selected literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis, allowing for the integration of diverse research designs and perspectives. This analytical approach facilitated the identification of key pedagogical benefits, challenges, and emerging trends associated with the use of Canva and comparable platforms. Emphasis was placed on studies addressing student engagement, creativity, language skill development, and collaborative learning environments. By synthesizing empirical evidence alongside theoretical frameworks, this review provides a nuanced understanding of how digital design tools contribute to learner autonomy, motivation, and 21st-century skills in ELT settings. The method ensures a balanced and rigorous examination of the current state of research, informing both educational practice and future investigations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Design-Based Learning (DBL) in Language Education

Design-Based Learning (DBL) is an innovative educational approach that centers on fostering creativity, problem-solving skills, and learner autonomy through hands-on, project-based activities (Gómez Puente et al., 2013). Unlike traditional rote learning, DBL encourages students to immerse themselves in authentic, meaningful tasks that require the practical application of language skills in real-world contexts. This approach not only enhances language proficiency but also nurtures intrinsic motivation by making learning relevant and personally engaging.

In the context of language education, DBL empowers learners to take ownership of their learning journey by designing solutions to communicative challenges, such as creating presentations, digital stories, or multimedia projects (Diederer et al., 2024). DBL significantly enhances students' flow experience—a state of deep focus and enjoyment—and stimulates creative thinking, both of which are crucial for effective language acquisition and practical communication

(Egbert, 2003). By aligning projects with learners' interests and goals, DBL promotes autonomy and relevance, which in turn boosts engagement and motivation.

The integration of digital design tools like Canva within DBL frameworks further amplifies these benefits. These platforms provide accessible, user-friendly environments where learners can create, collaborate, and showcase their work, fostering not only language skills but also digital literacy and teamwork. DBL transforms the traditional teacher-led classroom into a dynamic, student-centered space where learners actively participate in problem-solving and knowledge construction.

Moreover, the cyclical nature of DBL—characterized by iterative design, reflection, and refinement—mirrors the educational game design process and supports continuous learning. This iterative cycle is particularly effective in language education, where ongoing practice, feedback, and adjustment are essential for mastering new skills and concepts.

Digital Storytelling as a Language Learning Tool

Digital storytelling merges traditional narrative techniques with multimedia elements such as images, audio, video, and interactive features to create rich, engaging educational experiences (Hadj, 2024). It serves as a powerful tool in language learning by enhancing comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation through creative expression.

Research indicates that digital storytelling is as effective as, if not more than, traditional teaching methods in improving second language skills (Xu & Hashim, 2023). By allowing learners to construct and share personal stories, this approach fosters creativity and critical thinking, increasing learners' emotional and cognitive investment in the learning process. Additionally, digital storytelling promotes digital literacy, a vital competency in today's technology-driven world.

Dunford & Jenkins (2017) highlights that digital storytelling leverages Web 2.0 technologies, which actively engage students and promote interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and media literacy. The multimedia nature of digital storytelling appeals to diverse learning styles, enabling learners to express complex ideas through multiple modes—visual, auditory, and textual. Digital storytelling has become an increasingly effective pedagogical approach in language education, allowing students to construct and share meaningful narratives using multimedia elements. Tools like Canva play a significant role in this process by offering intuitive, user-friendly platforms where learners can combine text, images, audio, and video to tell their stories. This multimodal composition encourages creativity and helps students develop both linguistic and digital literacy skills in an engaging, real-world context.

Moreover, digital storytelling through platforms like Canva is particularly beneficial for shy or reluctant learners. It provides alternative modes of expression that do not rely solely on traditional oral presentations or written assignments, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. By empowering students to express themselves in diverse ways, digital storytelling helps build confidence, enhances motivation, and allows for personalized language learning experiences.

Visual Aids in EFL Classrooms

Visual aids have long been recognized as essential components in language teaching, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where learners benefit greatly from multimodal input (Chung, 2023). Visuals such as images, videos, graphic organizers, and infographics enhance comprehension by providing contextual clues that make language input more accessible and meaningful.

Research shows that incorporating cultural visuals in EFL textbooks and materials improves learning efficiency by linking language to real-life contexts, thereby facilitating better retention and deeper cultural understanding (Kiss & Weninger, 2017). Visual aids stimulate cognitive

processes by connecting new vocabulary and grammar to familiar or tangible examples, which supports long-term memory.

Beyond comprehension, visual aids increase learner motivation by making lessons more engaging and interactive (Rentería Montoya, 2017). The use of digital visual tools, including Canva, enables teachers to create customized, interactive, and visually appealing materials tailored to diverse learner needs and preferences, thus enhancing the overall learning experience.

Canva in English Language Teaching

Canva is a versatile and user-friendly digital design platform that offers educators and students a wide range of templates and tools to create visually appealing educational materials. These include presentations, lesson plans, infographics, certificates, portfolios, and collaborative projects, making Canva a valuable asset in ELT classrooms.

Research suggests that Canva enhances student engagement, creativity, and language skills by facilitating project-based and collaborative learning experiences (Kocaarslan & Riedler, 2024). Many students prefer Canva over traditional tools like Microsoft PowerPoint because it allows them to produce more comprehensive and visually attractive notes and projects, which supports better comprehension and cognitive development.

However, integrating Canva into ELT is not without challenges. Teachers may require training to effectively use the platform, and issues such as technological proficiency, equitable access to devices, and reliable internet connectivity can pose barriers. Despite these challenges, Canva's potential to foster digital techno-preneurship and 21st-century skills—such as creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy—makes it a promising tool for modern language classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This literature review highlights the transformative impact of Canva and similar digital design tools on English language teaching (ELT). By seamlessly integrating key pedagogical approaches such as design-based learning, digital storytelling, and the use of visual aids, these tools significantly enhance learner engagement, foster creativity, and improve overall language proficiency. Canva's intuitive, user-friendly interface combined with its wide array of features—including templates, multimedia integration, and collaborative options—makes it an especially effective platform for creating interactive and cooperative learning experiences that resonate with diverse learner needs.

Despite the clear benefits, the review also acknowledges the challenges associated with integrating these technologies, such as varying levels of teacher digital literacy, access to resources, and potential distractions in digital environments. Nevertheless, the pedagogical advantages, coupled with the alignment of these tools with essential 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy, underscore the importance of incorporating such technologies into ELT curricula. As educators continue to explore and apply these tools in practice, ongoing research will be vital to further uncover their full potential and to develop effective strategies for their integration in diverse educational contexts.

REFERENCES

- Abduvalieva, D. I. "Harnessing AI tools to enhance foreign language acquisition: innovations and impacts," *American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 22–25, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.37547/ajsshr/volume05issue01-07>.
- Chung, D. T. K. "The Efficacy of Visual Aids in Enhancing Vocabulary Acquisition in EFL Classes," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i10-80>.

- Diederer, L., Veelenturf, T., Taconis, R., & Bekker, T. Tools to empower learners in Challenge-Based and Design-Based Learning projects, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3663433.3663453>.
- Dunford, M., & Jenkins, T. Digital storytelling: form and content. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. [Online]. Available: <http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/34761/>.
- Egbert, J. "A Study of Flow Theory in the Foreign Language Classroom," *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 87, no. 4, pp. 499–518, 2003. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4781.00204>.
- Gao, H., Chong, A. Y.-L., & Bao, H. "Metaverse: Literature Review, Synthesis and Future Research Agenda," *Journal of Computational Information Systems*, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2023.2233455>.
- Hadj, B. H. "The power of the narrative: using digital storytelling to foster student motivation and participation," *Eurasian Science Review*, vol. 2, no. 6, pp. 43–53, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.63034/esr-182>.
- Huseynova, S. The Impact of Digital Tools on Foreign Language Acquisition in Under-Resourced Educational Settings in Azerbaijan, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202411.0976.v1>.
- Kalyani, L. K. The Role of Technology in Education: Enhancing Learning Outcomes and 21st Century Skills, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.59828/ijrmst.v3i4.199>
- Kiss, T., & Weninger, C. "Cultural learning in the EFL classroom: the role of visuals," *ELT Journal*, vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 186–196, 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ELT/CCW072>.
- Kocaarslan, G., & Riedler, M. "Canva for education uygulamasinin görsel sanatlar dersinde işbirlikli öğrenme ile kullanimi: öğretmenler için örnek etkinlikler," *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.17755/esosder.1371676>.
- Rentería Montoya, J. M. Promoting Engagement in the English Language Learning Through the Use of Visual Aids, 2017. [Online]. Available: <http://bibliotecadigital.udea.edu.co/handle/10495/11003>.
- Rotunnaja, N. I., Ambia, T. P., & Taufik, I. N. "Pemanfaatan Aplikasi Canva sebagai Media Pembelajaran Menulis Teks Iklan bagi Siswa SMP," *MARDIBASA*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 129–138, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.21274/jpbsi.2023.3.2.129-138>.
- Gómez Puente, S. M., van Eijck, M., & Jochems, W. "A sampled literature review of design-based learning approaches: a search for key characteristics," *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 717–732, 2013. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10798-012-9212-X>.
- Xu, A. O., & Hashim, H. "Digital Storytelling's Impact on ESL Learners' Speaking Skills (2019–2023): A Systematic Review," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 12, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i12/19903>.
- Yusupalieva, S. "Developing Students' Communicative Competence using Authentic Materials with Information Technologies," *International Journal of Industrial Engineering, Technology & Operations Management*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 59–62, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.62157/ijietom.v2i2.62>.