






# The Use of Padlet in EFL Writing Classes in Vietnam: From Teachers' Perspective

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**Abstract.** Padlet has been widely deployed in teaching and learning writing skills. A growing body of literature recognizes this tool's virtues, such as increasing students' motivation and involvement in learning, alleviating their anxiety, and improving their language use and idea organization. However, few studies have investigated the application of Padlet in Vietnam. This study, therefore, set out to explore the most popular activities in writing classes with the application of Padlet, the effectiveness of Padlet in enhancing students' engagement in learning and their writing performance, and the challenges facing teachers when utilizing Padlet and their solutions. Data from 200 EFL teachers in Vietnam were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The findings indicate that Padlet was mostly employed in sharing ideas and providing feedback. Thanks to its attractive layout and smart functions, Padlet could facilitate students' collaboration and increase their interest and motivation. However, no significant improvement was seen in students' writing competence. Besides technical issues, writing teachers often had difficulties in managing their classes and giving feedback due to some limited features. It is advisable that teachers provide their students with clear instructions, constantly check their progress and combine Padlet with other applications to maximize its benefits.

**Keywords:** Padlet · Writing Skills · Writing Performance · Motivation · Engagement

## 1 Introduction

Writing has been generally regarded as the most demanding skill to master among the four major English language skills. This may derive from its complicated process of brainstorming ideas and turning them into a written text effectively [1]. Accordingly, the ambitious aim of boosting students' language accuracy, cohesion, coherence, and ability to generate ideas makes teaching writing an uneasy task [2]. Teaching EFL writing in the Vietnamese context also seems to be an issue of great concern because teachers find

it challenging to provide appropriate input before writing, give effective feedback, and bring learning experiences closer to social contexts [3].

In light of technological developments, online websites, and applications can be effectively deployed in language teaching, especially writing, to help increase collaborative experiences, student engagement, and motivation [4, 5]. Those platforms and tools also allow students to improve their writing skills and language accuracy thanks to their interactive and collaborative learning experiences [6]. Besides Google Docs, Facebook, and Edmodo, which have been mentioned in previous research, Padlet is also widely utilized in writing classes. Several studies have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of Padlet in learners' motivation and participation in learning, as well as their writing performance [7, 8]. Most agreed that Padlet is conducive to students' involvement in learning and their writing quality. However, a search of the literature has revealed that few studies have examined teachers' employment of this digital tool in writing classes in Vietnam. Therefore, the current study attempts to address this gap by seeking answers to three research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What do teachers often use Padlet for in EFL writing classes?

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of Padlet on EFL learners' engagement and writing performance?

RQ3: What are the challenges facing teachers when using Padlet in EFL writing classes and their solutions?

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Teaching Writing Skills

Writing is one of four essential skills for any language learner. Hyland [9] mentioned seven perspectives from which writing was clearly conceptualized. He stated that writing is not just written texts with a coherent organization of structures, words, clauses, and sentences following certain rules. More importantly, an effective writing piece embraces meaningful content, appropriate genre, and creativity to express the writer's opinion and achieve the purpose of writing. This perspective is echoed by Akkaya and Kirmiz [10], who viewed writing as how people express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts in black and white. Nunan [1], in his book, emphasized the connection between writing and its real-world purposes. Therefore, more than just a host of ideas expressed in the form of text, writing is complicated as a mental and physical process. Moreover, writing is also considered a complex skill because students can reach the highest level of thinking, according to Bloom's taxonomy, by creating writing pieces [11].

The complexity of this skill causes students and teachers to face manifold problems. Dar and Khan [12] reported average anxiety, which most students in the study suffered when writing, caused avoidance behaviors. Students' anxiety is also mentioned in the research of Fareed et al. [13] as a popular issue during writing classes. Their findings indicated that teachers have difficulties seeking suitable teaching methods, allocating more time to practice for students, and facilitating them to generate more ideas for writing. Therefore, the importance of teaching writing starkly manifests itself in two

factors: its challenges which can cause many issues in learning and teaching, and the usefulness of writing in the real world as a communicative tool [12].

With the application of technology, various issues were reported to be alleviated more or less, thereby facilitating the process of teaching and learning writing. Ma'azi and Janfeshan [14], in their research of forty Iranian language learners, proved that Edmodo, one of the social group websites, could significantly help students to better their writing skill, especially language accuracy, and their enthusiasm for this skill. These findings were mirrored in the book chapter of Hegelheimer and Lee [15], who concluded that digital tools enable students to learn writing more effectively when having real-world interaction in classroom collaboration without shyness and anxiety. Furthermore, with the aid of technology, shared tasks can generate more ideas for writing, mitigate workload, and provide clearer contexts with visual materials.

## 2.2 Padlet and Commonly Used Activities

In view of the growing popularity of Padlet, the common activities in which this application is deployed is a topic of interest for researchers. Affendi et al. [16], in their study of the application of Padlet in the pre-writing stage, emphasized the usefulness of this tool in providing visual mapping with images and videos which can be feasibly attached to Padlet walls. Moreover, they suggested other meaningful activities to scaffold vocabulary and recalled necessary background knowledge. Similarly, Salsabila and Saepuloh [17] indicated that this website helps students to contribute their ideas enthusiastically. Furthermore, teachers and students were reported to easily organize the ideas into neat sequences which are appropriate for task requirements, generic structures, and social contexts. Going beyond pre-writing stages, this study also mentioned that the integration of Padlet in the while-writing and post-writing stages would enable their students to write collaboratively and receive teacher and peer feedback. Throughout four meetings observed, it was common for students engaging in collaborative writing to be anonymous or not, depending on the teacher's requirement [17]. After that, they can give reactions and feedback to each other's writing. This research also pointed out that students' confusion about giving feedback can impede this step, leading to many blank comments and lesser interaction. To tackle this issue, teachers can also utilize Padlet to highlight important language features conveniently, as all the writing pieces are shown publicly on the Padlet wall. In addition, Padlet assists teachers in providing feedback that helps enhance students' awareness of the errors and offers viable solutions to mitigate them. More importantly, the teachers also reported that this feedback could be helpful for students' revision for examination after the lesson ends.

## 2.3 Padlet and Learners' Writing Performance

Padlet has been demonstrated to be conducive to learners' writing, especially in terms of language use. Awaludin et al. [18] and Rashid et al. [7] found that this online tool can enhance language accuracy, for it encourages learners to proofread their work and check for language use before posting on the public class wall. They also showed that Padlet is useful, especially for students with low proficiency in English, since they could view their peers' posts as models of language use.

Similarly, Defilipi et al. [8] examined the effectiveness of collaboration on Padlet for A1 level students' descriptive writing based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Language) through a pre-post test and a survey. The findings of this study revealed that learners showed development in their writing, and the most evident improvement was in the grammatical use of simple present tense with adverbs of frequency. This is in line with Affendi et al. [16], who studied the beneficial effects of utilizing Padlet as a pre-writing strategy. By examining students' essays before and after using this digital learning tool, one of the conclusions drawn from the research is that there was also an improvement in their writing. However, they found that the main development was the essay's length, as the visual mapping technique on Padlet facilitated students' generation of ideas and encouraged learners to produce longer sentences [16].

## 2.4 Padlet and Learners' Motivation and Engagement in Learning

Padlet has been proven to promote students' engagement in the learning process. Fuchs [19] stated that Padlet encourages learners' participation in and outside the classroom. This coincides with Defilipi et al. [8], who indicated that this digital tool fosters learners' involvement in learning. Since students are the center of the learning activities, they can gain knowledge by working with their writing several times and commenting on their classmate's work. Similarly, Rashid et al. [7] found that Padlet improves students' motivation to work on tasks and communicate with group members outside the classroom thanks to the functions of uploading images, clips, and links, and the attractive design of the website is also motivating. Results also showed that collaboration on Padlet alleviates the stress which is often connected with writing tasks. Awaludin et al. [18] also found positive correlations between the use of Padlet and learners' motivation. Their findings revealed that students found this application convenient in that it can be accessed at learners' own pace, and they enjoyed uploading posts, interacting with their peers' posts, and receiving comments from friends and instructors.

## 3 Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to provide greater comprehensiveness on a phenomenon and a higher level of reliability for the data than a single method [20]. This study involved the participation of 200 EFL Vietnamese teachers in responding to a questionnaire, before ten among them were invited to join a semi-structured interview. These participants were conveniently sampled from the researchers' colleagues and different groups of EFL teachers who were willing to partake in the study after the researchers called for voluntary participation on social media. The survey questionnaire consists of 4 main parts, beginning with biographical questions, such as years of teaching experience, the type of institution in which they taught, target students they often worked with, and their experience of using Padlet in writing classes. It is shown that research participants come from diverse teaching backgrounds, working for both public and private organizations or freelance. Most of them have been teaching English for more than five years. The questionnaire then proceeds to the main part with three sections.

**Table 1.** Purposes of teacher use of Padlet in EFL writing classes

Purposes Frequencies	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Lead-in	88	9.6%	44.0%
Brainstorming/sharing ideas	172	18.7%	86.0%
Collaborative writing	120	13.0%	60.0%
Sharing teaching/learning materials	68	7.4%	34.0%
Showcasing students' products (writing pieces, vocabulary diaries, etc.)	76	8.3%	38.0%
Providing feedback on students' products	120	13.0%	60.0%
Asking for students' peer feedback	88	9.6%	44.0%
Asking for students' reflection on the lesson	92	10.0%	46.0%
Homework submission	96	10.4%	48.0%
Total	920	100.0%	460.0%

In the form of multiple-response questions, the second section identifies the purposes of teachers' use of Padlet in writing classes, while the fourth explores possible issues facing them. Using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, the third part encompasses 19 items that investigate teachers' perceptions of the effects of Padlet on teaching writing skills. The interview was subsequently conducted to allow participants to elaborate on their responses to the survey and explore teachers' potential solutions to their issues when using Padlet in their writing class. Regarding data analysis, the SPSS software was used to generate descriptive statistics for the data from the questionnaire data while the data from the interview went through a 3-stage procedure including transcription, coding, and interpretation. The interpretation of mean scores for the five-point Likert scale questionnaire is 1.00–1.80: strongly disagree, 1.81–2.60: disagree, 2.61–3.40: neutral, 3.41–4.20: agree, 4.21–5.00: strongly agree.

## 4 Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Findings

#### **RQ1: What do teachers often use Padlet for in EFL writing classes?**

As indicated in Table 1, among nine purposes of teachers' use of Padlet in writing class, brainstorming/sharing ideas was the most frequently used (18.7%), followed by collaborative writing and providing feedback, with each comprising 13.0%. These applications were also opted for by a large number of teachers using Padlet. Particularly, the vast majority of teachers (86%) self-reported using Padlet for their students to brainstorm or share ideas, and 60% of them used this tool for collaborative writing and feedback-given activities. Additionally, Padlet served other common functions such as lead-in,

**Table 2.** Teachers' perceptions of the effects of using Padlet in EFL writing classes

No	Statements	N = 200	
		M	SD
1	I find Padlet easy to use in class.	3.755	0.431
2	Padlet is easier to use for writing assessments than conventional ways of assessment.	3.14	0.665
3	Padlet allows my students to update information in a fast and convenient way.	3.62	0.631
4	Padlet allows my students' multimedia submissions (videos, audio, pictures, etc.).	3.78	0.415
5	My students find writing on Padlet interesting and enjoyable.	3.44	0.573
6	Padlet encourages my students' active participation.	3.78	0.415
7	My students enjoy inviting their friends to read their posts.	3.02	0.549
8	My students enjoy commenting on their peers' writing.	3.42	0.495
9	My students enjoy receiving their peers' comments on their posts.	3.42	0.495
10	Padlet encourages my students to learn from their peers' writing.	3.80	0.401
11	Padlet improves my students' concentration.	3.24	0.587
12	Padlet enhances my students' motivation to complete writing tasks.	3.56	0.498
13	Padlet encourages my students to complete tasks together.	3.56	0.573
14	Padlet encourages my students to interact with their peers outside the class.	3.44	0.639
15	Padlet enables my students to get more and better ideas for writing from their peers' posts.	3.74	0.440
16	Padlet helps improve the organization of my students' writing.	2.95	0.768
17	Padlet facilitates my students' vocabulary learning.	2.08	0.691
18	Padlet encourages my students to check language use before posting their writing.	3.20	0.750
19	Padlet enhances my students' grammar use.	2.04	0.722

asking for students' peer feedback, reflecting on the lesson, and submitting homework, with each taking up around 10%. It can be inferred that teachers took full advantage of Padlet in their writing classes to achieve different teaching purposes, in which brainstorming/sharing ideas, collaborative writing, and providing feedback seemed the most preferred utilization.

### **RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the effects of Padlet on EFL learners' engagement and writing performance?**

As illustrated in Table 2, teachers perceived Padlet as a useful and convenient tool in their class by virtue of its easiness to use (Item 1,  $M = 3.755$ ,  $SD = 0.431$ ), functions to facilitate students' information update (Item 3,  $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.631$ ) and multimedia

**Table 3.** Challenges facing teachers when using Padlet in writing classes

Challenges Frequencies	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Technical issues	100	13.1%	50.0%
Difficulty in keeping track of student's progress	92	12.0%	46.0%
Difficulty in using for young learners	88	11.5%	44.0%
Difficulty in using for low-level students	84	11.0%	42.0%
Difficulty in using for large-size class	116	15.2%	58.0%
Time-consuming to give feedback	116	15.2%	58.0%
Students' distraction	88	11.5%	44.0%
Students' unfamiliarity with technology	80	10.5%	40.0%
Total	764	100.0%	382%

submissions (Item 4,  $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.415$ ). Similarly, they also believed Padlet helped enhance their students' engagement and motivation in writing class. This is indicated by a high degree of agreement for Items 5 to 14, in which mean scores ranking 3.41–4.20, except Item 7 ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 0.549$ ) and Item 11 ( $M = 3.24$ ,  $SD = 0.587$ ) when teachers' attitude is at a moderate level. Whether or not students enjoy inviting their friends to read their posts and Padlet improves their students' concentration seemed to be questionable from teachers' viewpoint. One research participant stated: "Writing in Padlet is more attractive than Google Docs because students can choose colors for their work and leave reactions and comments on others' work." Another added: "Writing in Padlet encourages my students to express their ideas more thanks to the anonymous mode. They can write freely without the fear of being judged and compared".

Regarding the remaining items (15 – 19), research participants thought there was no significant progress in students' writing competence in using Padlet. While teachers acknowledged the benefit of Padlet in broadening students' ideas for their writing (Item 15,  $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 0.44$ ), they did not hold a belief in the impacts of Padlet on improving students' vocabulary learning (Item 17,  $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 0.691$ ) and grammar use (Item 19,  $M = 2.04$ ,  $SD = 0.722$ ). They also remained neutral on whether Padlet improves the organization of students' writing (Item 16,  $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 0.768$ ) and encourages students to check language use (Item 18,  $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ). Such findings showed that while teachers generally agreed with the positive effects of Padlet on their learners' motivation and engagement, they did not see considerable improvements in learners' writing performance.

### **RQ3: What are the challenges facing teachers when using Padlet in EFL writing classes and their solutions?**

As indicated in Table 3, using for large-size classes, giving feedback, and technical issues were considered the most popular challenges facing teachers when they employed Padlet in writing class, with the first two obstacles occupying the highest proportion of 15.2% each, followed by the third one (13.1%). This is supported by the fact that

more than half of teachers (58%) reported encountering obstacles in using Padlet for a large number of students and providing feedback. Giving a reason for this choice, some participants claimed: “Since Padlet has no self-editing functions as Google Docs, it is quite time-consuming to edit and comment on my students’ writing.” Similarly, half of them regarded technical issues as the most frequently experienced difficulties, making Padlet inapplicable if the internet connection is unstable. One pointed out: “My students’ answers posted may be deleted instantly in case of a power cut or disrupted wi-fi connections.” Along with these commonly faced challenges was the difficulty in keeping track of students’ progress and using it for young learners. One admitted: “It is hard to keep track of who is writing, whether all students are writing, and the stage they are in when I ask them to write a more than 100-word paragraph”. Another stated the unsuitability of deploying Padlet to teach writing to young learners due to their lower level of autonomy. Other impediments were evenly distributed, around 10%, suggesting that teachers also found difficulties in using for low-level students, coping with students’ distraction and unfamiliarity with technology.

The teachers also shared how these problems could be resolved. Most of them recommended that teachers should give students step-by-step instructions and demonstrations before practice. Some teachers said that they were able to keep a better track of their student’s progress during in-class writing activities by requiring them to update their posts after a certain amount of time constantly. It is also suggested that students be divided into smaller groups to work on different Padlet walls for large classes. Furthermore, due to some currently limited functions of Padlet, it would be a better idea, according to some teachers, to assign students not too long writing pieces so that both teachers and students could have a clearer overview of all the posts. Making use of Padlet together with other applications was considered to be another viable measure to increase its effectiveness.

## 4.2 Discussion

The most significant findings to emerge from this study can be summarised as follows. With regard to its popular applications in writing class, Padlet was mainly utilized in brainstorming and sharing ideas, collaborative writing, and giving feedback. Salsabila and Saepuloh [17] also reported this finding. Moreover, an overwhelming proportion of teachers considered Padlet as a user-friendly tool.

In terms of the utilization of Padlet’s influence on students’ involvement in learning, there was a consensus among teachers that this application could greatly improve their students’ motivation and engagement in the lesson. In accordance with the present results, previous studies demonstrated that the use of Padlet increased students’ active participation and their communication with their peers in and out of class as they found it interesting to be able to post, interact with their friends’ posts and receive comments from their teacher and friends on a fascinating website with the assistance of smart features [7, 8, 18, 19].

Concerning how effective the employment of Padlet was for students’ writing performance, there seemed to be no discernible improvement, particularly in their organization of ideas and language use. This finding contradicts earlier research suggesting that utilizing Padlet improved students’ grammatical use and stimulated them to check their work carefully for language use [7, 8, 18].



## 5 Conclusion

Generally speaking, Padlet is an effective and user-friendly application that will boost students' motivation and engagement in learning. Its attractive layout and smart functions allow Padlet to become an appropriate tool to be employed in teaching not only writing skills but also other skills. Therefore, Padlet should not be limited to online classes use only, but teachers can still make the most of it in or outside offline classes. Notwithstanding Padlet's considerable merits, challenges confronting teachers should not go unnoticed. Teachers who would like to utilize Padlet in the future should be prepared for technical problems as well as difficulties in using this application for big classes and providing feedback. These issues, however, could be remedied by the following solutions. First and foremost, it is of paramount significance that teachers give clear and detailed instructions and demonstrations to familiarise students with this application and pay close attention to students' progress when they are writing on Padlet in class. In addition, instead of relying on only one application, teachers can employ Padlet with other ICT tools to achieve desired outcomes.

Although the current research has presented some major findings that help answer all the research questions, there are several limitations to take into consideration. The most important limitation lies in the fact that this study is restricted to merely teachers' perceptions. It is advisable that future studies either investigate students' opinions or employ a quasi-experimental design to gain a greater insight into the impacts of the utilization of Padlet on students' writing performance.

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