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# Academia Open



*By Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo*

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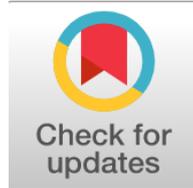
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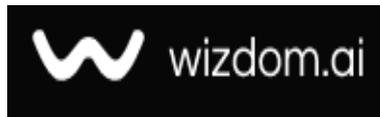
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## Teachers' Strategies Using Canva for Recount Writing in EFL Classrooms

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### Abstract

**General Background:** Digital technologies have become integral to contemporary language education, particularly in supporting multimodal learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. **Specific Background:** Writing, especially recount text composition, remains a complex skill for EFL learners due to demands on organization, grammar, and creativity, prompting teachers to adopt visual-digital tools such as Canva to support instruction. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite growing use of Canva in classrooms, limited research has examined how teachers strategically design, implement, and adapt Canva-based writing lessons in authentic EFL settings. **Aims:** This study aimed to explore teachers' strategies in using Canva to support students' recount text writing in an Indonesian junior high school. **Results:** Using a qualitative case study involving two English teachers, data from interviews, observations, and document analysis revealed three core strategies: purposeful planning aligned with genre structure, visual scaffolding during writing activities, and adaptive responses to technological and learner challenges. **Novelty:** The study provides an in-depth description of pedagogically grounded practices showing Canva as a structured instructional tool rather than merely a design application. **Implications:** Findings suggest that successful integration of visual-digital platforms in EFL writing depends on teacher readiness, digital competence, and flexible instructional design, offering practical guidance for educators seeking to implement technology-supported writing instruction.

### Highlights:

Instructional planning aligned visual templates with narrative structure components.

Guided frameworks enabled learners to organize ideas while composing texts.

Flexible adjustments addressed connectivity issues and varying technical abilities.

### Keywords:

Canva; EFL Writing; Recount Text; Teacher Strategies; Digital Pedagogy

## Introduction

Technology has become an integral part of modern education, profoundly changing pedagogical approaches and learning experiences. In the 21st-century classroom, digital tools are no longer a complement, but are essential for encouraging engagement, creativity, and critical thinking. One of the technological innovations that has gained significant traction in English teaching is Canva, a versatile graphic design platform that empowers teachers and students to create visually appealing and interactive learning materials. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, Canva's multimodal capabilities offer a unique opportunity to enrich language mastery, especially in developing writing, reading, and speaking skills [1]. The platform's strength lies in its ability to bridge the gap between linguistic competence and digital literacy. By integrating visual elements (e.g., infographics, timelines) with textual content, Canva aligns with the principles of multimodal literacy, which emphasizes the interaction of different semiotic resources to create meaning. This synergy is very important in writing learning, where students often have difficulty organizing ideas and motivations. Research by Titiyanti [2] shows that Canva templates can reduce the cognitive burden on EFL learners, allowing them to focus on higher aspects of writing, such as coherence and reader awareness.

In addition to technological tools, media based on culture such as local folklore have also been proven to be effective in improving writing proficiency. As highlighted by Taufiq [3], incorporating local narratives into writing tasks not only engages students but also deepens cultural understanding and contextual use of language. However, while such traditional methods remain valuable, digital platforms like Canva offer scalable ways to combine cultural content with contemporary pedagogy—for example, by designing visual storyboards for local folklore. Technology in education provides unparalleled opportunities to support active, personalized learning. Dynamic media like Canva exemplify this potential by enabling students to curate their learning journeys [4]. Canva exemplifies this potential by allowing students to curate their learning journeys, experiment with digital story formats, and develop 21st-century linguistic and skills. This study explores how EFL teachers are leveraging Canva's features to address the complexities of teaching writing while examining the challenges that arise in their implementation.

One of the essential skills that need to be developed in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is writing skills, which are complex abilities that require not only mastery of grammar and vocabulary, but also critical thinking skills, organization of ideas, and students' creativity. According to Hyland [5] writing in the context of EFL involves a complex cognitive process where students must master not only the linguistic aspects but also the rhetorical and cultural conventions of the target language. This challenge is further complex when students have to write specific genres such as recount text that requires chronological sequencing of events and accurate use of past tense. By leveraging innovative learning media like Canva, students' writing skill development challenges can be overcome more effectively. Canva, a graphic design platform, has become an increasingly popular tool in the world of education, including in language learning. The platform offers a unique solution by combining ease of use, design flexibility, and collaborative features that fit the needs of 21st century learning. Features such as posters, infographics, storyboards, and various other visual templates not only make it easier for teachers to create interactive and engaging learning media, but also provide a visual framework that can guide students in the writing process.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the use of technology is increasingly important in answering the challenge of teaching writing skills. Taufiq's research [6] found that tools such as My Simple Show significantly improve students' ability to write recount texts by providing a visual framework for organizing ideas. These findings are consistent with Canva's role in also serving as a scaffolding tool to help students express their ideas more effectively and creatively. Furthermore, previous research has shown that Canva not only increases student engagement but also helps them better understand learning concepts through clear and engaging visualizations [7]. A study by Yundayani [8] revealed that the use of Canva in learning to write increased student motivation by 40% and idea organization skills by 35%. This advantage is increasingly relevant in the digital era where generation Z and Alpha students tend to be more responsive to visual and interactive learning.

In addition, Canva has also proven to be effective in improving students' writing skills. Research conducted by Amanda shows that Canva helps students structure text with better structure [4]. This is in line with Hadi's research [9], which shows the effectiveness of Canva in improving students' writing performance through pre-test and post-test methods. Other research has also revealed that Canva can help students explore their ideas in a more targeted and creative way [8]. The study further highlights that Canva not only improves procedural writing skills but also has a positive impact on students' critical thinking and creativity, especially in procedural texts [10]. In addition to improving the quality of the text produced, Canva is also able to strengthen student involvement in the writing learning process. The attractive visualizations and user-friendly interface allow students to focus more on developing their ideas, without being too overwhelmed by the technical aspects of writing. With features such as templates, icons, images, and the ability to freely set layouts, students can freely express their ideas in a more organized and visually appealing form of text.

Students' perceptions of 'Canva for Education' also show that it is effective in supporting writing learning through a qualitative descriptive approach [11]. Many students feel more confident and motivated in writing when using visual media, as they can see the connections between ideas, structures, and the appearance of text more realistically. Various techniques, such as word webbing [12], have been shown to improve students' ability to organize ideas and express them coherently in writing. Similarly, the use of visual tools like Canva provides a structured yet flexible and creative platform for students to develop their writing skills. Furthermore, in the context of technology-based learning, Canva not only acts as a supporting medium, but also as a tool to develop higher-order thinking skills. Students are trained to not only copy or rewrite information, but also to analyze, rephrase, and present their ideas logically and creatively. Canva therefore has great

potential to be leveraged as part of a learning approach that emphasizes collaboration, independence, and 21st-century competency development.

Building upon the positive student perceptions and the growing body of research on Canva's effectiveness, it is essential to observe how this digital platform is implemented in real classroom settings. One such context is SMP Kemala Bhayangkari 7 Porong, the use of Canva has been applied in various English learning activities, Canva has been used as a learning medium to practice all language skills. However, the most significant impact is seen in the improvement of writing skills, where the platform helps students organize ideas, increase creativity, and produce more structured and interesting writing. Initial observations revealed that teachers have utilized Canva to create engaging and interactive learning materials that enhance student engagement and facilitate a more dynamic learning experience, making it easier for students to understand the presented material and organize their ideas effectively in writing tasks. Furthermore, the school actively participates in non-academic competitions related to educational technology, reflecting their emphasis on integrating tools like Canva into the learning environment. The school has also participated in educational technology competitions and won second place in an E-flyer design competition, showing its commitment to creative digital literacy. In addition, teachers at this school are already well-trained in using Canva as an instructional medium. They frequently attend technology-based training and workshops to deepen their pedagogical and technical competence. This professional development has enabled them to design Canva-based learning that aligns with curriculum goals and student needs. Furthermore, students have shown tangible academic improvement, particularly in writing performance. Assessment records indicated an increase in students' writing scores after the integration of Canva into classroom instruction, especially in recount text assignments. These outcomes reflect how Canva not only fosters visual creativity but also contributes to measurable academic achievement. The success of Canva implementation in this context demonstrates the crucial role of well-prepared teachers in utilizing technology to support meaningful learning. By combining visual tools, structured design elements, and student-centered tasks, Canva enables learners to better understand text structures, organize their thoughts coherently, and express ideas with clarity and creativity. In this way, technology acts as an instructional bridge, enhancing student engagement and supporting deeper learning experiences in EFL writing classrooms. According to Shabani [7], students learn best when they are presented with tasks that lie just beyond their independent capabilities but can be achieved with assistance from teachers or peers. This concept aligns with the use of Canva in writing instruction, where the platform serves as a scaffolding tool. By providing templates, visual aids, and collaborative features, Canva allows students to organize and express their ideas more effectively. Such guided support not only improves technical writing skills but also encourages creativity and critical thinking. This is in line with research conducted by Hadi [9] and Masturoh [13] which emphasize the role of teacher training, and professional development in maximizing Canva's potential for improving writing skills. Based on the pre-observation results, the researchers found that Canva is specifically used for recount text materials, which allows students to develop their writing skills by organizing ideas effectively and creatively. Recount text, which focuses on retelling events or experiences chronologically, helps students improve their ability to construct a coherent narrative.

According to the theory of constructivism discovered by Kumar [14], learning is an active process in which students build new knowledge based on previous experiences. In this context, teachers are no longer the only source of information, but rather facilitators who help students construct understanding through exploration and reflection on their own learning experiences. The use of visual media, such as Canva, in learning recount texts can improve students' engagement and their understanding of the material, as described in a study by Fendi [15] that emphasizes the importance of visual media in education. The visualizations provided by Canva allow students to see the relationships between events chronologically, which is the core of the recount text. Elements such as images, icons, colors, and visual timelines can clarify the structure of the text, assisting students in reconstructing a coherent and logical retelling. Additionally, this approach encourages students to think reflectively about their personal experiences or events that they write about, thereby increasing the depth of their writing.

In addition, the use of audiovisual media in learning recount texts has been proven to be effective in improving students' writing skills. A study developed audiovisual media for the learning of retelling texts and found that the media was valid and feasible as a learning tool. Media such as short videos, animations, or interactive presentations can enrich the learning experience and provide additional stimulus for students with visual and auditory learning styles. Thus, Canva's integration in learning recount texts is not only in line with the principles of constructivism but is also supported by research conducted by Rahmah [16], which shows the effectiveness of visual and audiovisual media in improving students' writing skills. Canva is able to combine visual and audio elements in one easy-to-access platform, providing a more comprehensive and meaningful learning experience. This integration also allows teachers to apply differentiated learning approaches, adapting to the needs and learning styles of each student.

Previous studies provide a solid basis for this research. For example, Eka [17] highlights Canva's ability to help students explore their ideas more creatively, such as personal experiences, memorable events, or daily activities that are commonly used in recount texts. This support allows students to organize and express their thoughts in ways that enhance both critical and procedural writing skills. Canva's role in increasing engagement and understanding through visual media is also emphasized by research conducted by Masturoh [13] and Royani [18], which shows its impact on student perception and performance. Furthermore, research conducted by Royani [18] explores how Canva helps in structuring text and improving writing achievement through a project-based learning approach. Previous research on the use of interactive media such as blogging [19] has also shown that engaging and fun writing activities can improve students' motivation and writing skills. Canva, as an interactive visual design platform, contributes to creating fun and meaningful learning experiences for students. More than just a visual aid, Canva provides an exploration space that encourages students to develop ideas independently but stay focused. Features such as online collaboration, template selection, and merging text with images allow students to construct meaning contextually, while customizing their writing style. This approach is in line with efforts to strengthen 21st century literacy skills, which emphasize creativity, communication, and problem-solving. In addition,

teachers also benefit in terms of flexibility and efficiency in designing learning that suits the characteristics of students.

The study underscores Canva's relevance as a tool to address challenges in teaching writing while promoting high-level thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and idea synthesis. Therefore, its use needs to be strategically designed so that it focuses not only on the final result in the form of visual products but also on the thinking process and writing skills developed by students. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Canva is strategically used by teachers to improve students' writing skills in EFL classrooms. The main focus of this research is to answer the following question:

1. What strategies do teachers use to design writing lessons with Canva?

This study aims to explore how teachers design writing lessons using Canva in EFL classrooms. By understanding the strategies applied by teachers, especially in student learning development, this research is expected to make a real contribution in developing more innovative and relevant writing learning methods in the digital era. Technological integrations such as Canva, which serve as scaffolding tools, help students organize their ideas more effectively within the limits of their abilities with the guidance of teachers, thereby increasing engagement, creativity, and overall effectiveness of writing learning.

## Method

### Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore teachers' strategies in using Canva to improve students' writing skills in EFL classrooms. The qualitative approach was chosen because it was able to explore the meaning and deep understanding of the perspective of the subject being studied, especially in the context of complex and dynamic education. This study used a case study research design because it allowed researchers to investigate in detail the practice of using Canva in a real-world context, as well as provide a comprehensive overview of the learning strategies implemented by teachers.

### Research Participants

The research was conducted at Kemala Bhayangkari 7 Porong Junior High School, a school that had actively integrated Canva in English language learning. The selection of this location was carried out purposively because the school showed characteristics that were relevant to the focus of the research, namely the use of technology in learning to write. The participants in this study were two English teachers who had first-hand experience in using Canva as a learning medium in the classroom. These teachers were selected for their active involvement in designing, implementing, and evaluating Canva-based writing learning. By focusing on teachers' experiences and perspectives, this study aimed to uncover in-depth insights into how Canva was strategically used as a tool for learning to write, including how teachers tailor the media to students' needs and learning goals. The strategies explored included aspects of planning, implementation, providing feedback, and adaptation during the learning process.

### Research Instruments

This study employed three qualitative instruments to explore teachers' strategies in designing Canva-based writing lessons: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These instruments were selected to capture teachers' strategic practices from different dimensions—what they plan, how they implement, and how these strategies are reflected in real classroom activities and student products.

### Data Collection Methods

To collect relevant and focused data, this study employed three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Each method was designed to directly explore the strategies used by teachers in designing writing lessons with Canva.

#### 1. Semi-Structured Interviews

- Interviews were conducted with two English teachers to gather in-depth information about their instructional strategies. The interview aimed to uncover how teachers plan, implement, and adapt Canva-based writing lessons.

Interview questions included:

- What strategies do you use when planning Canva-based writing lessons for recount texts?
- How does Canva support students in developing creativity and critical thinking when writing?
- This approach follows Datko's recommendations [20] which emphasizes the importance of interviews in qualitative methods to obtain participants' perceptions, motivations, and approaches to their teaching practices.

#### 2. Classroom Observations

- Class observations were conducted Classroom observations were conducted in a non-participatory manner to see how the strategies described in the interviews were applied in practice.

Sample observation items:

- The teacher uses Canva features aligned with recount text structure.
- The teacher provides instructional guidance or scaffolding.
- Field notes were recorded to capture detailed classroom activities, instructional interactions, and student responses.

### 3. Document Analysis

- Lesson plans, student worksheets, and Canva-based student projects were analyzed to identify how teachers embedded strategies into learning design and how students applied those strategies in their work.

Guiding questions include:

- How do students' Canva products demonstrate the use of instructional strategies?
- How is Canva integrated in the lesson plan to support recount text writing?
- As suggested by Bowen [21] documentation is an important tool in qualitative research to understand the contextual factors that influence educational practices as well as to strengthen the validity of data through triangulation.

By combining these three methods, the research is expected to provide a holistic picture of Canva-based writing learning strategies, as well as in-depth research questions related to how teachers use digital technology to improve students' writing skills in the context of EFL.

## Result And Discussion

### A. Result

This study reveals important aspects identified from field data related to the use of Canva by teachers in learning to write recount texts in EFL classrooms. These aspects emerged from the triangulation analysis of data obtained through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and learning document analysis. All findings are aligned with the research question regarding the strategies teachers use to design writing lessons using Canva in EFL classrooms.

#### 1.1 Teachers' Strategies in Planning Canva-Based Writing Lessons

Teachers designed their Canva-based writing lessons by selecting templates and visual formats that aligned with the structure of recount texts. In the planning phase, teachers chose formats such as storyboards, timelines, and mind maps to visually represent the stages of a recount text: orientation, events, and re-orientation. These selections were not random; they were chosen to provide a clear structure and guide students' writing logically and sequentially.

Teachers also considered students' prior understanding before implementing Canva. They began by asking students to draft manually or share oral narratives to identify common difficulties, such as poor chronological order or unclear openings and closings. This diagnostic step informed the selection of Canva elements that would support those weak areas. Lesson plans reviewed during document analysis showed clear alignment between the choice of Canva templates and the targeted writing skills.

#### 1.2 Strategies for Using Canva to Support Students During the Writing Process

During implementation, Canva was used as a scaffolding tool. Teachers provided students with pre-designed templates that mirrored the structure of recount texts. These templates included labeled sections and sample prompts, helping students stay focused and organized. For instance, students used "My Trip Storyboard" to structure their writing by adding visuals, short descriptions, and timelines.

Observation data confirmed that the teacher modeled how to use Canva, gave step-by-step instructions, and then allowed students to work individually or in small groups. Students engaged actively, and most were able to translate their ideas into text supported by visuals. The teacher provided real-time feedback during the activity, helping students revise their content as they worked.

Document analysis showed consistency between lesson objectives and the Canva-based outputs. Templates used in class were found in the lesson plans, and student worksheets reflected the sequence of orientation–event–re-orientation, supported by visuals and brief texts.

#### 1.3 Strategies for Adapting Canva-Based Lessons When Students Face Challenges

Teachers reported several challenges in implementing Canva, such as internet connectivity, limited digital skills among students, and distraction due to the creative features of the platform. To address these, teachers adapted their strategies in several ways, creating video tutorials and simple step-by-step guides, using assessment rubrics that emphasized content over design, and giving individual assistance to students who were struggling.

Observation notes further documented real-time interventions during class sessions. Students facing difficulty were supported through individual guidance or paired with peers who had stronger technical skills. The teacher's role shifted from direct instruction to facilitation and troubleshooting, emphasizing a flexible and responsive approach to instruction. These adaptive strategies ensured that Canva remained a tool for enhancing learning rather than a barrier to participation.

## B. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the use of Canva in designing writing instruction, particularly for recount texts in EFL contexts, was not a mere integration of digital tools, but rather a structured and intentional pedagogical strategy. The strategies identified—planning, scaffolding, and adapting—reflect core principles of constructivist learning, in which students actively build their understanding through interaction with meaningful materials and supportive environments.

In the planning stage, Canva was selected purposefully to align with the genre structure of recount texts. Teachers utilized visual templates that reflected the narrative sequence—orientation, events, and re-orientation—enabling students to comprehend and apply the rhetorical organization of the text more intuitively. Rather than beginning with abstract writing tasks, students were introduced to visually segmented prompts that guided their cognitive process in building coherent narratives. The alignment between the chosen Canva formats and the writing objectives found in the lesson plans illustrates a strategic application of digital tools grounded in instructional goals. This finding is in line with prior studies that emphasize the importance of aligning technology use with content and pedagogy to achieve learning outcomes effectively Mishra & Koehler [22].

The implementation phase further demonstrated how Canva served as a visual scaffolding mechanism. The platform's features provided learners with a concrete structure, supporting them in generating and organizing ideas coherently. Particularly for EFL learners, who often struggle with organizing narrative texts, the visual frameworks helped reduce cognitive load and increased clarity. Students were observed to rely on these visual prompts to structure their writing more logically, and even students with limited writing fluency were able to follow the sequence with the help of labeled templates and sample elements. These practices align with theories of visual and multimodal learning, such as Mayer's [23] multimedia learning theory, which holds that students learn better when words and visuals are integrated.

Adaptation also played a central role in the strategic use of Canva. Teachers demonstrated flexibility in responding to various challenges, including limited digital literacy, unequal access to devices, and students' tendencies to focus on aesthetic features over content. To address these issues, instructional strategies were adjusted: teachers provided simplified templates, paper-based alternatives, and content-focused rubrics that prioritized writing quality over design.

Moreover, although the learning tasks were primarily individual, the classroom environment fostered informal collaboration. Students engaged in peer feedback, shared technical tips, and discussed content decisions with their classmates. This unstructured yet natural peer interaction suggests that Canva also supports social dimensions of learning, reinforcing the constructivist view that learning is both a cognitive and social process Palincsar [24]. The platform's affordances for sharing and presenting also encouraged students to see their work as meaningful and communicative, not just as isolated assignments.

Altogether, the strategic integration of Canva in EFL writing lessons highlights the importance of thoughtful instructional design in digital learning environments. Teachers were not only integrating a tool, but crafting a learning process where students could engage with genre structure, express ideas visually and verbally, and receive support suited to their needs. These strategies collectively contributed to improved student engagement, clearer organization of ideas, and increased confidence in writing. The findings reaffirm that digital tools like Canva can enhance learning outcomes when used as part of a coherent instructional strategy rooted in pedagogical intention, scaffolding, and responsiveness.

## Conclusions

This study has explored the strategies used by teachers to design Canva-based writing lessons in an EFL context, with a specific focus on recount text instruction. The findings revealed that the integration of Canva was not incidental or purely technological, but rather a pedagogically grounded effort involving deliberate planning, structured scaffolding, and adaptive implementation.

Teachers strategically selected Canva templates that aligned with the structural features of recount texts, enabling students to visualize and internalize narrative sequencing. During the learning process, Canva functioned as a scaffold through its visual and interactive features, allowing students to organize their ideas coherently while engaging with content more meaningfully. Furthermore, teachers demonstrated adaptability in addressing classroom challenges by modifying instruction, simplifying materials, and supporting students with varying levels of access and digital literacy.

These strategies reflect broader principles of constructivist pedagogy and digital multimodal learning, where technology is positioned not merely as a tool, but as an integrated part of instructional design that enhances student engagement,

autonomy, and textual understanding. The study contributes to the growing body of research on technology-enhanced language learning by offering concrete examples of how Canva can be pedagogically operationalized to support writing development in EFL classrooms.

Future studies may expand on these findings by involving a broader range of participants or exploring how student outcomes are influenced by different Canva-based teaching models. Nevertheless, this study provides practical insights for educators seeking to integrate visual-digital tools into writing instruction with intentional and reflective strategies.

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