



## Empowering Students' 21st Century Skills through Canva Application

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**Abstract:** The study aimed at investigating the use of Canva platform as digital media in writing lesson to empower students' 21<sup>st</sup> skills. The qualitative-descriptive method is used in this study. The research subject was 60 students at Indraprasta PGRI Jakarta University, majoring in English Education who were given questionnaires, feedback and observed by their projects to collect the data. The results showed that most of the students 21<sup>st</sup> century skills empowered well in writing through various project templates in Canva platform. It was concluded that Canva carried out more effectively, not only students will produce good projects, but their core competencies in writing can also be broadened and strengthened. Moreover, using appropriate media, projects, authentic topics and students' feedbacks can empower students to be critical thinker, creator, communicator and collaborator as well in academic and beyond.

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## Introduction

Children today from birth are surrounded by digital technology; Since then their daily lives and practices are linked to social networks smartphones tablets and internet use (Iivari et al., 2020). Digital Educators today focus on a set of recommendations known as 21st century skills one of which is creativity skills. Perhaps its time to step into the 21st century and add to the various productive exercises that are flooding the creative rise in the education market and move on to a new set of skills that take into account people speaking, general teacher (Piirto, 2011). The 21st century has brought change in people's lives, varying from economy and production, to communication and learning. In particular, the technological tools and platforms which have emerged in recent years have centred on individuals' lives, and changes in every walk of life have resulted in very complex and demanding social, economic, and academic lives, which are thoroughly different from previous ones (Belluzzo & Rosetto, 2019). These changes and characteristics of the new century require the students to possess new skills, which are mostly referred to as 21st century skills, although some of them are perennial. Students need to acquire and develop these skills, because they should be ready to meet the demands expected from them when they graduate.

In the 21st century, the term "technology" is an important issue in many areas including education. This is because technology has become a highway of knowledge transfer in most countries. Today's technological integration has been through innovation and transforming our society that has completely changed the way people think, work, and live (Christiana & Anwar, 2021).

Savvy (Nurul Asri, 2019) defines the five competencies as follow: critical thinking in the 21st century is described as the "ability to design and manage projects, solve problems, and make effective decisions using a variety of tools and resources"; communication in a 21st



century context refers not only to the ability to “communicate effectively, orally, in writing, and with a variety of digital tools” but also to “listening skills”; collaboration in a 21st century context requires the ability to “work in teams, learn from and contribute to the learning of others, use social networking skills, and demonstrate empathy in working with diverse others”; creativity is often described as “the pursuit of new ideas, concepts, or products that meet a need in the world; and the last, innovation is often defined as “the realization of a new idea in order to make a useful contribution to a particular field”. Moreover, Mc Coog et. al. (Nurul Asri, 2019) argue that to acquire 21st century skills, the students must be encouraged to create new ideas, evaluate, and analyze the material presented, and apply that knowledge to their previous academic experiences.

Our students today are expected to work hard to enter have online learning by knowing and using various digital media. In our learning processes, they have, in other words, to be able to demonstrate performance-based skills or competencies required by the learning demands. Unfortunately, however, most of them are not equipped with these competencies during their learning processes, and higher education institutions have not anticipated in their curricular programs require of their graduates.

In this era of rapid change, the students of English Department of Indraprasta PGRI Jakarta are sorely lacking in some basic skills and a large number of applied skills. The students had insufficient vocabulary and grammar in oral and written communication, critical thinking and problem solving. Moreover, they tended to be passive in teamwork and collaboration or working in diverse teams. On the other hand, the teacher still taught in conventional way, like lecturing and discussions. The English teacher did not use innovative pedagogical way in teaching the students in language learning. They use textbooks as learning resources instead of applying technology in their learning methods or technology. Therefore, to figure out of how to empower students’ 21st century skills, they need to apply new way of learning for life in 21st century, such as interactive learning, creative pedagogic.

In the current situation, teachers prefer to participate in making their learning media use technology. Some researchers (Christiana & Anwar, 2021) showed that technology is the most important thing in language learning media because the use of technology can increase students’ motivation. They are equipped with digital age literacy, inventive thinking, high-level thinking and sound reasoning, effective communication and high productivity. Students need them to develop their language skills.

Teachers in higher education institutions and universities need to be encouraged to train students in utilizing a PBL approach. Gómez-Pablos et al. (Almulla, 2020) noted that the PBL approach is one of the best academic options because it represents a student-based learning process that considers the interests of students and encourages them to participate actively in the learning process, which should be considered a research process goal. A PBL is a student-centred approach that induces learners to operate collaboratively in a long-term project so as to solve a real-world problem or develop a product (Ghobriani, 2020). The success of teaching learning process cannot be separated from teachers’ role. It empowers teachers to contribute their pedagogical experts to increase the power of using technologies for communicating, collaborating, and learning. There are various kinds of media, but visual aids are the appropriate media for learners, particularly young learners. The visual aids which commonly used for teaching English are pictures, really or real objects, drawings, or teacher-made drawings, charts, posters, cartoons, and flashcards (Anggraeni & Pentury, 2018).

One of the applications that can be utilized to create learning media is Canva (Salam & Mudinillah, 2021). Everything is in Canva application. Therefore, the integrating teaching which is using Canva app as digital technology can encourage both teachers and students to



develop and boost their basic skills in academic performance, develop vocabulary and begin to comprehend and remember details of written and oral stories or texts to communicate, critical thinking skill to solve the problems, also collaborative and creative skills to work in team and ability to be ready to enter job markets. Canva is used by a variety of jobs and businesses. It is a platform which will help students in college and in their careers. Most importantly, students find it engaging. Through the use of Canva in the classroom, students not only develop important 21st century skills but do so in a way that is enjoyable and creates a polished product. In Canva, there are various designs provided to apply students' creative projects which are presentation, brochure, social media post, stories, posters, cards, resumes, videos, animation, logo and many more.

Canva is a web-based graphic design tool that allows users to create digital and print images to customize social media pages, enhance blog posts, and create printable marketing materials (Deford et al., 2017). With Canva, users create layouts from scratch or start with templates, pre-loaded with thematic fonts, objects, color palettes, text boxes, and platform-specific dimensions. Users have the ability to share designs and collaborate with team members to create visually-appealing marketing materials designed to attract the attention of their target audience.

This research is conducted to find how to empower students' 21st century skills through Canva app in writing learning. Besides, it is also conducted to find whether the use of Canva app is flourishing in boosting the students' language skills which is also included in 21st century skills. Further, students are encouraged to use authentic topics, appropriate media through project based learning to become writer, creator, communicator, collaborator and critical thinker.

## **Research Method**

The study attempted the qualitative method by using observations in learning process, instruments, and documents (teaching material and their projects of English reading using Canva). The instrument used was a feedback in a questionnaire and project worksheets which were prepared for the purpose and which was administered to 60 students, (45 females and 15 males) at Indraprasta university, majoring in English education department in South Jakarta, during June and July 2021. The students were studying in the same reading course but were at two different classes. They were first-year students in third term in 2021/2022. The questionnaires were composed of twenty questions about implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in writing projects, the feedbacks of their projects' results and the use of digital platform of Canva in e-learning process. Further, observations, video recording, and students' projects were used in this study.

Project-based learning is applied in the case of complex learning activities, which aims to help students acquire various linked skills. The projects had students exercising many of the 21st century skills-problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and ICT literacy as well. The learning activities are designed in eight lessons and lasted within two months. The two classes run the activities of two hours per week. Students were explained the techniques, learning model and the descriptions, provided the instructional design and the skills they applied as the achievement points of the activities. The instructional designs were given at the beginning of the applying process and the strategies were given in the learning activities.

## Results and Discussion

Canva is a comprehensive design tool that is simple to use and wonderful for pros and beginners alike (Klug & Williams, 2020). The learning 21st century skills framework expands and deepens through Canva in the project of 'The e-Class Magazines Project' as discussed in the following sections. Canva is not only useful but it can also save time (Salam & Mudinillah, 2021). Thus, Here is the table that we facilitate the learning 21st century skills framework:

**Table 1. The E-Class Magazines Project**

| No | Context – The Project (Authentic Learning) | Implementation of Canva templates             | Teaching Material selection & Analysis                              | 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills   | Students' Integrated Skills  |
|----|--|---|---|---|--|
| 1. | The design of 'The e-Class magazine'.      | Using Magazine Cover design, Photo College    | Adjective phrases in title and tagline.                             | Creativity & Innovation   | Communication Skill, Making Decision Skill, problem solving skill, teamwork, technology use.   |
| 2. | Global News                                | Poster, Label, Info graphic                   | Types of sentences: Simple sentence, compound and complex sentence. | Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity & Innovation  | Communication Skill, Making Decision Skill, problem solving skill, digital literacy skill, teamwork, technology use.                                   |
| 3. | Global Articles                            | Social Media Story, video                     | Using types of sentences in paragraphs.                             | Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity & Innovation. | Communication Skill, Making Decision Skill, problem solving skill, digital literacy skill, productive skill, creative skill, teamwork, technology use. |
| 4. | Advertisements                             | Poster, Label, Info graphic, Animation, video | Phrasal verbs & Adjective and verb phrases                          | Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity & Innovation. | Communication Skill, Making Decision Skill, problem solving skill, digital literacy skill, productive skill, creative skill, teamwork, technology use. |
| 5. | Share the project                          | Thumbnail, Social Media Story                 | Phrasal verbs & Adjective and verb phrases                          | Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity & Innovation. | Communication Skill, Making Decision Skill, problem solving skill, digital literacy skill, productive skill, creative skill, teamwork, technology use. |

The feedbacks from the study shown that the teaching approach was mainly student-centered and the activities used in the learning processes were based on students' writing projects using Canva. It means that Students applied their knowledge and skill in learning



processes. The result reveals that 55% of the students could use Canva in projects allowed them to participate actively, increase creativity in the projects of teamwork to create various contents of writing topics. Then, the 52% students could use pick up phrases, sentences and paragraphs in writing from Canva and could understand them at the end of the group presentation test. While 89% Students claimed that it was easy to practice and understand them when working with their teamwork. The project presentations scores revealed that 94% of the students could apply and understand the writing lesson and empower their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as compared to 6% of them.

The study described that using appropriate 21st century skill learning models, the students demonstrate a capacity to integrate their skills positively. In fact, how effective the project through Canva impacts: first, the students' integrated skill as a new mix of skills in the Writing lesson, such as Adjective phrases in title and tagline, Types of sentences: Simple sentence, compound and complex sentence, Using types of sentences in paragraphs, and Phrasal verbs & Adjective and verb phrases. The finding clearly show that the students who were taught by means of Writing using the project-based with Canva achieved better results than before. It shown by the projects they have presented and the feedbacks. Besides, their skills are empowered in Communication Skill, Making Decision Skill, problem solving skill, digital literacy skill, productive skill, creative skill, teamwork, technology used. They become global learners, and they have positive effect to empower the 21st century skills.

Authentic Learning (context) or conditions in which learning activities occur (the people, objects, symbols, and environment and how they all work together to support learning), are more influential. Transferring what they is learned from one context to another (such as from the classroom to the real world) as they do the projects to apply the 21st century skills to empower their potentials and also new skills.

The writing project illustrates students outcome most needed Canva templates, content themes, language skills, combined with 21st century skills. The framework adds to the subject and interdisciplinary 21st themes relevant to some of key issues and problems, such as global news, global articles, and advertisement. Finally, the core subject and interdisciplinary 21st century themes are surrounded by learning and innovation skills, media and technology skills, and life skills which are called integrated skills.

The 21st century is a century of skills and abilities. So if we want to succeed in this digital world, we need all the required skills and abilities. 21st-century skills are generally referring to core competencies of digital learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving in the real world (Singh, 2021). These skills are developed to help students to keep them with the evolving phase of the modern world. It is a wide range of expertise, abilities, work habits and character traits that educators, school's reformers, college teachers, worker and other considered to be essential to success in today's world especially in college and contemporary profession and workplace. These skills can be applied in all fields of study and all professions of teaching, as a civic environment in the life of the students. The skills of the 21st century are not different. However, how these skills are incorporated in the classroom and how technology is going to improve a lot is slightly different. Indeed, with technology, the classroom of modern time transcends all physical barriers and reaches around the globe.

The set of 21st century skills focuses on critical learning and problem solving in the context provided by the teacher based on instructional design, communication and collaboration in teamwork doing the project, also creativity and innovation when they applied their imagination, ideas and invention in the projects. The students' teamwork was confronted with an immense amount of content knowledge, including global issues, global methods to design, articulate, create and write. The teams' challenge was to use their critical thinking



skills- ability to analyze, interpret, evaluate, summarize, and synthesize all this information and apply the results to solve an urgent problem. The project team had to present the results of its research in a way that appealed to other students, engaging their interest through images, animations, video, and interactive template of Canva, as well as through clear and concise writing.

PBL is a student-centred approach that induces learners to operate collaboratively in a long-term project so as to solve a real-world problem or develop a product (Kristianto, 2020). Throughout the projects, the students on the team continually exercised their creativity and innovation skills; they invented a simulation animation, video, to demonstrate the available information in the magazine, and they came up with innovative ways to illustrate the concept of the class magazine. Besides, one of the most effective way to develop and empower creative skills is through design challenge projects in which students must invent solutions to real-world problems, such as designing the cover, the info graphic, the image that make the magazine looks modern and informational.

Canva, the visual media provided through technology, was seen as the potential means to increase the opportunities for students to be actively involved in writing processes. As noted by Tinio (Zhang, 2019) that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides students with digital age literacy, inventive thinking, higher-order thinking skills, effective communication, and high productivity. Canva Application Improves learning media effectively (Christiana & Anwar, 2021).

In line with the results of research conducted by (Bell, 2010), students develop twenty-first-century skills through PBL that will aid them in becoming productive members of a global society. Many of these skills are not measureable through standardized tests. We must shift our thinking about assessment when teaching twenty-first-century skills. With PBL, assessment is authentic. We measure a child's performance via rubrics, but a critical aspect of this model includes self-evaluation and reflection. Children learn from their processes. They reflect on how well they worked in a collaborative group and how well they contributed, negotiated, listened, and welcomed other group members' ideas. Students also self-evaluate their own projects, efforts, motivations, interests, and productivity levels. Students become critical friends by giving constructive feedback to each other, which helps them become aware of their own strengths and improve on their interactions with each other.

Critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, and creativity and innovation are skills set in the toolbox for learning, work and life in the 21st century. Empowering these learning and innovation skills are the knowledge tool and technologies in today's era. This leads the students to empowering their knowledge of information, media, technology, language skills and 21st century skills. Digital literacy skills are absolutely necessary to ensure the technology is used to supplement and not substitute for high quality instructional methods. Pre-service teachers using digital technology with valuable skills is the most powerful tools in teaching in the 21st century (Boholano, 2017). In line with the results of research conducted by Rahmatullah et al. (2020) that the use of audio-visual-based learning media with the Canva application, on the other hand, provides a new color in the learning process for economic subjects, namely being creative and innovative.

According to Niemi, et.al (2014) that although definitions of 21st century skills differ, there are some commonalities. The most important factor is that students must have the capacity to learn throughout life, and that education must provide the skills and mental tools to do so. The skills to inquire and create knowledge are most important, but they must be linked to analytical and critical skills, as well as creativity. Students must be able to ask questions, not just seek or repeat ready-made answers. They need to be able to work



independently, but also increasingly collaborate. Life is increasingly tied to technology. The learning environment is always changing and information and communication technology offers many new learning opportunities.

Teachers are faced with challenges and barriers all the time. Technology's place in society causes teachers to consider the implications for them in their role as educator and as lifelong learners themselves. The constant challenge for teachers is to draw upon their continually developing knowledge and skills about what to teach and how to teach. Technology is just one, but an important consideration in that equation (Eady, Michelle J.; Lockyer, 2013). The decision to use technology for instruction rests on the classroom teacher. Educational technologists have long suggested that use of digital technologies is more likely to lead to enhanced learning outcomes and student achievement when combined with student-centered practices (Howard et al., 2015).

## Conclusion

Teachers as educator and as lifelong learners are faced with challenges and barriers all the time. Innovative learning and technology development place in society causes teachers to consider the implications for them in their roles. The innovative implementation in writing learning using digital media through students' project can empower their 21<sup>st</sup> skills as well as enhance their writing learning outcomes.

The fact, in this study proposed that preparing the students for the contemporary world requires that students develop and empower their 21st century skills using Canva. The results of our research conduct us to imply that: (1) Students use Canva platform in doing their school project as their learning model have improved their new learning way, methods, multidisciplinary thematic and strategies to attend and adapt 21st century learning and writing skills demand as integrated skills; (2) The students' projects using real problems available will determine global issues in project-based approaches motivate and empower students' 21st century skills to become global learners; (3) The project context as a real-world activities stimulates the students to apply the 21st century skills to empower their potentials. As a result, if Canva is carried out more effectively, not only will students produce good projects, but their core competencies will also be broadened and strengthened. Students will become critical thinker, creator, communicator and collaborator as well in academic and beyond.

## Recommendation

Further development of using Canva platform can provide a lot of benefits of students learning projects to be savvy in using digital media and good communicator, oral and written. Considering the use of Canva with paired both positive, such as being a savvy student, 21 skilled-students and negative impact like, the attitude towards the technology in learning process to develop students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, creativity in using various apps in Canva are highly recommended for other lectures, college students or academic researchers.

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