
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CANVAS ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS FOR ESSAY WRITING CLASS: THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract: This research aimed to find the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Canvas online discussion forums for an essay writing class. The subject of this research was students in an essay writing class in English Language Education Program, and there were 12 students. The researcher's used of quantitative research survey design in this thesis, and intended to provide an overview of the effectiveness of the Canvas as an online discussion forum for essay writing class through questionnaires as the data collection technique. The data in this study are presented in numerical and descriptive form. In this study, the researcher attempts to analyze the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Canvas online discussion forum for essay writing class. This study contains a deep and detailed description of the result of this study. The findings from the questionnaire indicates the Canvas online discussion forums provoked different student reactions. The perception aspect is divided into three parts, as follows: affective aspects, sense of community, and cognitive aspects. Affective aspects consist of 6 indicators with five Likert scale ratings. Based on table 4.1, it can be seen that the average of affective aspects indicates 49.2% positive, 39.4% neutral, 12.1% negative. Sense of community consist of 4 indicators with five Likert scale ratings. Based on table 4.2, it can be seen that the average of sense of community indicates 50.04% positive, 36.37% neutral, 13.6% negative. Cognitive aspects consist of 6 indicators with five Likert scale ratings. Based on table 4.3, it can be seen that the average of cognitive aspects indicates 47.0% positive, 30.3% neutral, 22.74% negative. It can be concluded, students gave positive perceptions in the affective aspects, sense of community, and cognitive aspects. Overall, these aspects have a good enough perception. As for the implications of this finding, one of which is shown in indicators 12 "The online discussions section and activities in Canvas do not help me to improve my skill in English essay writing" indicates as many as 54.6% disagreed of Canvas online discussion forums could not help them to improve their writing skill. And then in indicator 13 "The use of the Canvas online discussion forums did not affect in my essay writing" indicates 45.5% students also recognized that Canvas online discussion forums for writing had a good effect.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, Essay Writing, Online Discussion Forums, Canvas.

INTRODUCTION

According to Rohana [1], somebody should use writing skills to communicate, speak, read and listen. Writing skills require training, thinking, creativity, and mastery of grammar, and should know what to write and what background topics will be written. It will make it easier for students to pour their ideas into writing.

Writing becomes a significant skill in higher education since students must produce many types of essays at this level of education. Slightly different from the lower level of English classes where the writing is usually about a simple topic, English writing in university is more academic and complex. The required essays to be written are also more complex than lower English levels [Hartini and Madya, 2].

An essay consists of paragraphs written on a single topic with a central main idea [Zemach and Lisa, 3]. It must contain three sections, but a five-paragraph essay is common in academic writing. An essay is a brief piece of writing that discusses, describes, or analyses a single topic. It can address an issue directly or indirectly, seriously or humorously. It can express personal opinions or report information. It should have several paragraphs, a good structure (introduction, body, and conclusion), and well-supported arguments.

In this pandemic era, all of those communicative competencies are becoming increasingly difficult due to online learning. Students are accustomed to improving their communicative competence offline or providing direct feedback to correct and understand. They will not receive feedback as directly as offline learning; instead, they will have to understand and learn from the online written input from the lecturer. Effective written communication can also be promoted online, for example, through online discussion forums such as Canvas.

During the pandemic situation, the use of Canvas has been implemented to assist the writing learning process, especially in essay writing class, at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember. Thus, the use of Canvas has been becoming one of the research topics that need to be investigated in pandemic era. Therefore, there's a need for further research to find cumulative findings. Below will be presented a brief review of several previous studies related to the use of Canvas, which then this study will attempt to cover from the gap found.

Ruslan et al. [4] have investigated research entitled "Optimizing LMS Canvas for Interactive Online Learning Perceived by the Students." The study examines the students' perceptions of using Canvas to promote interactive online learning. Implementing a case study as the research design, this study involved 77 students as the participants and used both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect the data. In this study, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study results revealed that students positively perceive Canvas as the media for interactive online learning.

The following study is from Nurfitriani [5] entitled "Students' Perceptions on the Benefits of Canvas-Based Learning Activities in Technology- Enhanced Language Learning Class." This study aims to reveal students' perceptions of the benefits of Canvas-based learning activities in technology- enhanced language learning classes. This study involved three students of English Education at a University in West Java, Indonesia. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and then analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study indicates that students positively perceive using Canvas in technology-enhanced language learning classes. Students claimed that the usage of Canvas in learning activities has several benefits. Those benefits are 1) Beneficial features for learning activities, 2) Improving students' engagement, and 3) Improving students' independent learning.

The two previous studies focused on students' perceptions, the same as this study. However, this study will attempt to investigate students' perceptions of different subjects, that is, in essay writing class. In conclusion, from those previous studies mentioned, this study attempts to investigate this topic because there is a need for further research in this area, covering different subjects and conducting this study using other methods. Therefore, the researcher is eager to conduct a study entitled "The Effectiveness of Canvas Online Discussion Forums for Essay Writing Class: The Students' Perceptions."

METHOD

The research design in this thesis is survey research design. According to Babbie cited in Creswell [6], survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. It includes cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection, with the intent of generalizing from an example to a population. The data in this study will be presented in numerical and descriptive form. In this study, the researcher attempts to analyze the effectiveness of Canvas online discussion forums for essay writing class: the students' perceptions. This study contains a deep and detailed description of the result of this study.

The sample collection was based on purposive sampling, which the researchers chose for a class that used Canvas online discussion forums in writing learning. Then class b even with the essay writing class, was picked as the sample. In this class, there were 12 participants in essay writing 2019/ 2020 academic year, but it has 11 students who filled out the questionnaire. One respondent did not give any response because she never entered essay writing class but her name is listed in the academic information system.

There are the procedure of this study, the researcher will collect the data from a questionnaire; the procedure follows:

1. The researcher gives students a questionnaire to fill out.
2. The researcher collects the questionnaire from students.
3. The researcher then analyzes the questionnaire from students.
4. The researcher then concludes the result of the research.

The instrument in this study in accordance with the aims of this study which focus on the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Canvas online discussion forums for an essay writing class, research instrument which is used in this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire employs a Likert scale with a closed-ended question, followed by 16 questions. The questionnaire was adapted from Ebrahimi et al. [7] journals on students' perceptions of effective discussion in online forums: a case study of pre-service teachers. The questionnaire includes affective aspects, a sense of community, and cognitive aspects. The authors modified the statements as needed for the study. The students then complete the questionnaire in Google Form.

Table 1 Blueprint of Questionnaire

No	Component	Indicator	Item Number	Likert Scale
1.	Affective aspects.	6	1-6	1-5
2.	Sense of community.	4	7-10	1-5
3.	Cognitive aspects.	6	11-16	1-5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Findings of the Affective Aspects of Students' Perceptions of the Canvas Online Discussion Forums

Table 2 The Affective Aspects of Students' Perceptions of the Canvas Online Discussion Forums

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		%				
Affective Aspects						
1.	I enjoyed participating in the Canvas online discussion forums of essay writing class.	9.1	45.5	27.3	18.2	0
2.	I would enjoy participating in such online discussion forums again.	0	45.5	27.3	27.3	0
3.	The Canvas online discussion forums provided less anxiety and a more relaxed environment than classroom discussion.	18.2	54.5	9.1	18.2	0
4.	I would have liked this essay writing class better without the Canvas online discussion forums.	18.2	18.2	54.5	9.1	0
5.	I felt my classmates were interested in my post in Canvas online discussion forums.	9.1	0	90.9	0	0
6.	I was interested in replying or commenting on my classmates' posts in Canvas online discussion forums.	9.1	63.6	27.3	0	0
The Average		10.6	38.6	39.4	12.1	0

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that the average of affective aspects indicates 49.2% positive, 39.4% neutral, and 12.1% negative. The highest percentage is indicated with 72.7% positive, 90.9% neutral, and 27.3% negative. For the lowest percentage is indicated with 9.1% positive, 9.1% neutral, and 0% negative. Table 4.1 displays the results for affective aspects. Indicator 1 “I enjoyed participating in the Canvas online discussion forums of essay writing class” indicates 54.6% positive, 27.3% neutral, and 18.2% negative. However, indicators 2, “I would enjoy participating in such online discussion forums again,” indicate 45.5% positive, 27.3% neutral, and 27.3% negative. Interestingly, indicator 3, “The Canvas online discussion forums provided less anxiety and a more relaxed environment than classroom discussion,” indicates 72.7% positive, 9.1% neutral, and 18.2% negative. Furthermore, indicator 4, “I would have liked this essay writing class better without the Canvas online discussion forums,” indicate 36.4% positive, 54.5% neutral, and 9.1% negative. Besides, indicator 5 “I felt my classmates were interested in my post in Canvas online discussion forums” indicates only 9.1% positive, 90.9% neutral and 0% negative, and the last indicator 6 “I was interested in replying or commenting on my classmates' posts in Canvas online discussion forums “ indicates 72.7% positive, 27.3% neutral, and 0% negative.

The Findings of the Sense of Community of Students’ Perceptions of the Canvas Online Discussion Forums

Table 3 The Sense of Community of Students’ Perceptions of the Canvas Online Discussion Forums

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		%				
Sense of Community						

7.	I experienced a sense of community with the other student in my group in essay writing class.	0	27.3	63.6	9.1	0
8.	I felt I was able to help out classmates who were experiencing problems during the essay writing class.	0	45.5	45.5	9.1	0
9.	I would like the essay writing class instructor to participate more in the Canvas online discussion forums.	0	63.6	18.2	18.2	0
10.	I got help with my problems via Canvas online discussion forums.	9,1	54.5	18.2	18.2	0
The Average		2.27	47.77	36.37	13.6	0

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the average of sense of community indicates 50.04% positive, 36.37% neutral, and 13.6% negative. The highest percentage is indicated with 63.6% positive, 63.6% neutral and 18.2% negative. For the lowest percentage is indicated with 27.3% positive, 18.2% neutral and 9.1% negative. As reflected in table 4.2 that is the results for the sense of community. Indicator 7 “I experienced a sense of community with the other student in my group in essay writing class” indicates 27.3% positive, 63.6% neutral, and only 9.1% negative. Concerning indicator 8 “I felt I was able to help out classmates who were experiencing problems during the essay writing class” indicates 45.5% positive, 45.5% neutral, and only 9.1% negative. In terms of indicator 9 “I would like the essay writing class instructor to participate more in the Canvas online discussion forums” indicates 63.6% positive, 18.2% neutral, and 18.2% negative. Interestingly, indicator 10 “I got help with my problems via Canvas online discussion forums” indicates 63.6% positive, 18.2% neutral, and 18.2% negative.

The Findings of the Cognitive Aspects of Students’ Perceptions of the Canvas Online Discussion Forums

Table 4 The Cognitive Aspects of Students’ Perceptions of the Canvas Online Discussion Forums

No	Statement	Forums				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		%				
Cognitive Aspects						
11.	I have benefited from the use of the Canvas online discussion forums for my essay writing.	0	45.5	45.5	9.1	0
12.	The online discussions section and activities in Canvas don’t help me to improve my skill in English essay writing.	9.1	18.2	18.2	36.4	18.2
13.	The use of the Canvas online discussion forums did not affect in my essay writing.	0	36.4	18.2	18.2	27.3
14.	Exchanging opinions with other students in the Canvas online discussion forums helped me look at the topics from a perspective that I would not have considered on my own.	18.2	45.5	36.4	0	0

15.	Participation in the Canvas online discussion forums in essay writing class using English help me to improve my writing skill.	9.1	54.5	27.3	9.1	0
16.	The process of writing in essay writing class through the topic in the Canvas online discussion forums helped me to understand them better.	18.2	27.3	36.4	18.2	0
The Average		9.1	37.9	30.3	15.16	7.58

Based on table 4, it can be seen that the average of cognitive aspects indicates 47.0% positive, 30.3% neutral, and 22.74% negative. The highest percentage is indicated with 63.6% positive, 45.5% neutral and 54.6% negative. For the lowest percentage is indicated with 27.3% positive, 18.2% neutral and 0% negative. The last result is cognitive aspects. Indicator 11, "I have benefited from using the Canvas online discussion forums for my essay writing," indicates 45.5% positive, 45% neutral, and 9.1% negative. Besides, indicator 12, "The online discussions section and activities in Canvas don't help me to improve my skill in English essay writing," indicates 27.3% positive, 18.2% neutral and 54.6% negative. However, indicator 13 "The use of the Canvas online discussion forums did not affect in my essay writing" indicates 36.4% positive, 18.2% neutral, and 45.5% negative. Interestingly, indicator 14, "Exchanging opinions with other students in the Canvas online discussion forums, helped me look at the topics from a perspective that I would not have considered on my own," indicates 63.7% positive, 36.4% neutral, and 0% negative. Furthermore, indicator 15, "Participation in the Canvas online discussion forums in essay writing class using English help me to improve my writing skill," indicates 63.6% positive, 27.3% neutral, and only 9.1% negative. The last, indicator 16, "The process of writing in essay writing class through the topic in the Canvas online discussion forums helped me to understand them better," indicates 45.5% positive, 36.4% neutral, and 18.2% negative.

It can be concluded, overall these aspects have a good enough perception. As for the implications of this finding, one of which is shown in indicators 12 "The online discussions section and activities in Canvas don't help me to improve my skill in English essay writing" indicates as many as 54.6% disagreed of Canvas online discussion forums couldn't help them to improve their writing skills. And then in indicator 13 "The use of the Canvas online discussion forums did not affect in my essay writing" indicates 45.5% students also recognized that the Canvas online discussion forums for writing had a good effect.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it concluded from students' perception of the Canvas online discussion forums in essay writing class. The perception aspect is divided into three parts, as follows: affective aspects, sense of community, and cognitive aspects. Affective aspects consist of 6 indicators with five Likert scale ratings. Based on table 4.1, it can be seen that the average of affective aspects indicates 49.2% positive, 39.4% neutral, 12.1% negative. Sense of community consist of 4 indicators with five Likert scale ratings. Based on table 4.2, it can be seen that the average of sense of community indicates 50.04% positive, 36.37% neutral, 13.6% negative. Cognitive aspects consist of 6 indicators with five Likert scale ratings. Based on table 4.3, it can be seen that the average of cognitive aspects indicates 47.0% positive, 30.3% neutral, 22.74% negative. It can be concluded,

students gave positive perceptions in the affective aspects, sense of community, and cognitive aspects.

Overall, these aspects have a good enough perception. As for the implications of this finding, one of which is shown in indicators 12 "The online discussions section and activities in Canvas don't help me to improve my skill in English essay writing" indicates as many as 54.6% disagreed of Canvas online discussion forums couldn't help them to improve their writing skill. And then in indicator 13 "The use of the Canvas online discussion forums did not affect in my essay writing" indicates 45.5% students also recognized that Canvas online discussion forums for writing had a good effect.

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