

TAWA – A Toolkit to Ace Written Analysis

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ABSTRACT: One of the major challenges faced by students, especially at higher learning institutions, is to read analytically and think critically. This results in the lack of interpretation skills which are required in the content of written texts. One of the courses offered in a Malaysian Public University aim at honing skills such as reading comprehension skills and various critical thinking strategies that can be applied in reading and writing. TAWA is an innovation that assists students in a step-by-step approach in tackling one particular assessment (assignment) – Written Article Analysis, from the above mentioned course. In this particular assessment, students are to read and analyse a piece of writing using critical reading elements. Besides that, students also have to work through the article systematically, engaging with the author, such as identifying author's tone, purpose of writing and intended audience. Students are also required to identify the main ideas and recognise supporting details used by the author. Armed with these, and more, students are required to critically evaluate arguments in terms of soundness, logic, credibility, relevance and validity. This is a process which assists them in developing informed opinions on the subject matter. As one goes deeper, there are numerous aspects to look into and these may be overwhelming to students. A pilot study was conducted in a public University with 80 participants. The control group (40) went through the common traditional teaching method while the experimental group (40) was exposed to additional materials from TAWA. A test was administered to both groups and the results showed that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in favour of the experimental group that were exposed to TAWA. Hence, this innovation has achieved the objective of bringing about a clear, easy-to-follow, simple way of what needs to be done when analysing a written text. Ultimately, TAWA is recommended as an effective tool to be used in assisting one to become a better critique in evaluating and analysing a written piece of work, apart from performing better in the course.

KEYWORDS: critical thinking, critique, analysis, systematically, written text, toolkit

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Critical reading is about developing a holistic comprehension, having the capacity to analyse content, grasp its meaning, and integrate it with prior knowledge. This process is characterised as reflecting on the materials read, examining the validity of the arguments in the text and identifying flaws and gaps in reasoning and analysing its meaning (Hidayati et al., 2020) which leads to the ability to write analytically. Critical reading and analytical writing skills are vital to be imparted particularly at the tertiary educational level. Both skills are interrelated; the missing critical reading skills will lead to the weak ability in producing a proper Written Analysis. Not only do these abilities empower undergraduates to be proactive in their studies, but they also stimulate the skills of writing and reading in a real-world application. In addition, the skills potentially contribute to better future employment in the labour market. In relation to this, the Malaysian higher institutions have come up with numerous academic plans and efforts in equipping graduates with critical reading and analytical writing skills. One of the higher institutions' attempts at cultivating the students' acquisition of these skills is by introducing the students to courses that teach these skills.

It is asserted that students lack critical reading and writing skills that are essential in helping them to do well in college (Crismore, 2000 in Seng & Zaidah, 2017). A number of students are still incapable of analysing reading materials critically, making writing a critical analysis (Written Article Analysis) a challenging task. There are courses offered in higher education as alternatives to fostering critical reading and analytical writing skills, but they have yet to produce a significant number of favourable outcomes. In fact, the efforts made by higher education institutions are deemed inadequate. Moreover, Malaysian students demonstrate low

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critical reading skills as a result of insufficient practice. In addition to having trouble understanding the meaning of texts, students also struggle to deduce the underlying information from the comprehension text (Zuhana et al., 2014). This absence of critical reading abilities definitely worsens students' performance in effectively completing the Written Article Analysis assignment. Therefore, this invention is developed to better equip students with critical and analytical reading and writing skills. Ultimately, TAWA not only aids students in performing well in their courses, but it also promotes a solid understanding of the processes involved in producing a Written Article Analysis critique in general.

This innovation was developed based on a survey questionnaire conducted through google form among students taking the English for Critical Academic Reading (ELC501) course. In order to help overcome problems in understanding critical reading and writing concepts in this course, the researchers gathered views from students of two campuses. Thus, based on the findings of the survey, the researchers proposed an innovation named 'TAWA', a toolkit to ace written analysis which is to provide solutions for the challenges in the ELC501 course

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of TAWA toolkit in improving students' skills in critical reading and writing which will assist them to complete the Written Article Analysis assignment successfully.

3.0 DEVELOPMENT OF TAWA

Students require a learning tool to help them prepare for the Written Analysis assessment. TAWA or Toolkit to Ace Written Analysis, is an interactive tool that encourages the development of critical thinking abilities. TAWA provides university students with a suitable platform for studying critical reading and analytical writing, which are essential study abilities. It is also a resource that instructors can use to instruct analytical writing. TAWA is not just applicable online but can also be implemented in conventional classrooms. This tool is useful, particularly in blended learning environments where students are encouraged to be autonomous.

TAWA includes all the themes in Written Analysis assessments for English for Critical Academic Reading (ELC501). All the resources are housed in an application that learners can access via mobile or the website. The tool's three primary elements are accessible to users. The first section introduces students to Written Analysis, allowing them to grasp the essential concepts of analytical writing. Learners are made aware of the prerequisites for critical thinking. There are also criteria samples for students to use. Exercises are also included to ensure that students fully grasp the topics covered. Furthermore, the notes are downloadable, allowing students to learn even when they do not have access to the internet.

Through TAWA, students will experience an engaging learning adventure. The application's user interface is rendered vibrant and animated, creating a more interactive and exciting platform for students to study independently. This functionality is necessary to accommodate students' diverse learning styles. The application of TAWA can also make learning more accessible and organised. Users can quickly select the topics or content they wish to study and switch to any other resource with a single click. In addition, people can learn about the topics at their own pace and with discretion. Besides, repeating the same content is permitted.

Specifically, the purpose of the innovation is to provide detailed guidelines for preparing Written Analysis by emphasising all of the argumentation components that are required in writing. This product intends to achieve the following objectives:

- To assist students in comprehending the step-by-step writing processes involved in producing Written Articles based on their critical reading of the text.
- To demonstrate ways for students to write the critique of the article analysis based on the argumentative elements highlighted.
- To serve as standardised guidelines for lecturers to teach simple ways of writing Written Analyses in classrooms.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical reading involves many complex processes, which can be mastered only through practice. The interaction between readers and text is vital in the process of comprehension because readers need to interpret, analyze, and evaluate the information in the text (Alem, 2018). According to Chou (2011), comprehension involves understanding the vocabulary, seeing relationships among words and concepts, organizing ideas, recognizing the author's purpose, evaluating the context, and making judgments. Moreover,

comprehension in reading is focused on three levels: word, sentence and text (Kustati, 2017). It appears that students have difficulties in all three levels causing the breakdown in comprehension, leave alone trying to see and make connections in order to evaluate and make informed judgements of the context.

Readers try to comprehend a text through cognitive skills such as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation and self-regulation (Elder & Paul, 2001; Facione, 2007; Paul & Elder, 2006). In the Written Analysis Assignment, the core skills required are interpretation, analysis and evaluation based on the various sub-skills taught. However, students are unable to grasp these vital sub-skills, which hampers their interpretation, analysis and evaluation incomplete and not fully explored or understood.

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Interpretation is the ability to comprehend information. In addition, Facione (2015) mentions that interpretation is considered as comprehending and expressing meaning of variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures or criteria. It involves skills such as identifying the author's purpose, point of view, recognizing the text type, summarizing the main idea, etc (Cottrell, 2011; Ku, 2009; McPeck, 2016; Suter, 2011). Students lack comprehension and hence are unable to express meaning in various contexts presented in the argumentative articles. This further builds up as a handicap to make judgements and identify the author's point of view. Some students may be able summarize the main ideas but lack interpretation or judgement skills to explore these ideas further in keeping with the author's point of view.

To help students to engage with the topic on comprehension and all the sub-skills required, this study has put together materials into a digital tool in order for the students of present day to engage with the material in ways that they find attractive and motivating. Hence the review of the literature continues to show how the use of technology in teaching and learning is pertinent for students. Mustafa (2016) claims the use of technology in classroom would equip the students with skills needed for the 21st century learning style. Previous studies show how technology has been incorporated through various social media platform such as Whatsapp, which require students to use many skills including thinking skills and communication skill. Integrating ICT in education is relevant because it has proven to be effective be it through mobile apps, gamifications, e-modules or other means. Awada (2016) also looked into the effectiveness of WhatsApp in language teaching and claims that teaching writing skills by means of WhatsApp was more effective than through regular instruction.

Moreover, it increased the learners' levels of motivation. Using ICT in the class makes the lesson more effective. This is because it attracts students to be more engaged with the lesson. Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015) posit that the integration of ICT in education promotes an active learning environment for both teachers and students. Hence, it helps in improving the students' comprehension of the lesson. Moreover, using ICT also promotes learners' autonomy. Learners' autonomy plays a big role in helping the students to appreciate their learning more. Therefore, it is clear that using technology in learning is very encouraged.

The related theory in the present innovation is cognitivism. According to this theory, learning opportunities should involve opportunities for learners to be actively involved in the process; at times developing their own goals and activities" (Allen, 2007, p. 31). In essence, effective instructional practices should be matched with equally good student motivation for promoting learning. An instructor can provide information and facilitate discussions, but a learner needs to understand the content. It is important to note that students' attitudes and motivation are the driving factors to the success of language acquisition. Motivation is seen by Gardner (2001) as a necessary personality factor that learners need for them to acquire a second language successfully. Hence Gardner's theory on motivation is also related to, and impacts the present innovation.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This innovation 'TAWA' was developed based on a needs analysis survey questionnaire conducted among students in two campuses of a public university. The students were in their first year of the degree programme and were required to take Critical Reading course which is a core subject. This course is considered challenging and among the tasks given is writing an analysis of an article. In order to help overcome their problems in writing critically, this study gathered views from students. A total of 217 students responded to the survey. The survey questions included the challenges faced in writing critically, problems encountered in searching for materials for the written analysis task and suggestions for improvements.

Based on the survey conducted, findings revealed that when asked about the problems faced in searching for appropriate articles or material for the Written Article Analysis task, most respondents reported that they have difficulty in choosing the appropriate article for their assignment. 57.9% reported that they were unable to classify articles as argumentative while 42.5% were unsure if it the articles were from a reliable source. Furthermore, 38.3% reported that they did not know where to look for suitable articles.

Regarding the challenges faced, 60% respondents stated that they were unable to recognize the differences between certain terms in critical thinking while 41% agreed that there were too many aspects covered in the course and 31% were unable to understand the arguments fully. In terms of writing the analysis, the respondents reported do not know how to write systematically and do not know the sequence of writing the analysis with a 43.9% and 42% respectively. In addition, 36.4% stated they do not know how to add their opinion in the written analysis. Suggestions given to improve the course include providing more samples (69.8%) and improving task requirements.

In sum, results obtained from the needs analysis survey showed that students were faced with various challenges in this course. Thus, based on the findings of the survey, the researchers proposed an innovation named "TAWA" (Toolkit to Ace Written Analysis) which is to provide solutions to the challenges in the Critical Reading course. Detailed descriptions of TAWA are presented in the following section.

This survey formed the bouncing board for the current study to take off the ground. TAWA was designed to help students and more details of TAWA appear in the subsequent section. In short, it is an app to prepare students for the Written Analysis assessment in a simple step by step method.

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A total of 60 students participated in this study. 33 went through the classes as usual while 27 used the Tawa app. These numbers are due to the classes that the students belong to. A test was conducted for both groups. Additionally, the students who used the TAWA tool were given a questionnaire to know their perceptions.

The Findings of the test showed that students who used the TAWA Tool did significantly better than the group which did not. As for the questionnaire which was administered after the use of the TAWA tool, most responded positively, the details of which will be discussed in the section entitled Results and Discussions.

6.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TAWA is an alternative solution to Written Article Analysis. It comprises various topics such as Main Ideas, Analyzing Types of Supporting Details, Making Inferences, Drawing Conclusion, Deductive and Inductive Reasoning, Making Assumptions, Purpose, Tone, Audience and Argument Analysis. This list is based on the criteria of the Written Analysis Assignment, a component in one of the Language courses in a public university in Malaysia.

Additionally, this toolkit, is packed with notes, exercises and links to other videos for the topics stated. Answer keys are also provided to help students check on their understanding of the critical reading concepts learnt.

Two groups were selected based on the researcher's two classes. The Experimental Group comprised 27 students while the Control Group comprised 33 students. These numbers were the registered number of students who willingly participated in this study.

An excerpt of a previous comprehension text, entitled Air Pollution in China was chosen for this study. Both groups were taught by the same researcher, using the notes made available to all lecturers. The experiment group was given the addition of the TAWA tool to use, after class hours. The 'test' comprising an excerpt of the article on air pollution was administered to the students. For the control group, it was administered after the traditional lessons were conducted while it was administered after the use of the TAWA Tool, for the Experimental group.

The breakdown of the questions are as follows:

Table 1: Type and Number of Questions in the Test

Type of Questions	Topic	Stated Main Idea Questions	Implied Main Idea Questions	Major Supporting Detail Questions	Minor Supporting Detail Questions	Type of Supporting Detail Category Questions
	1	1b	2d	2b	2c	5c
		2a	4b	3b	3c	
		3a	6b	5b	5c	
		4a				
		5a				
		6a				
Total: 17 Questions	1	6	3	3	3	1

The findings of this test were for the Topic question (only one question), all participants got this answer correct. Most answered "air pollution" while three answered "air pollution in China". Both answers were acceptable. There was no difference in either of the two groups, hence, no significance. The researchers of this study suggested that perhaps more questions should appear under this heading, instead of a limiting factor, of only one question. This will be considered when a rerun of the test is carried out with subsequent groups. Only then will the researchers have greater understanding of the students' comprehension of what a "topic" is. The researchers will have more data to confirm findings.

As for the stated main idea, there were six questions and these were averaged to tell the total correct answers for this category. The Control group comprising 33 students, showed 30 students who recorded correct answers, one did not answer and two wrote incomplete answers. It was reiterated that the stated main idea must be in a complete sentence. The student who did not answer was asked why, and her reply was she thought the answer would be a short one, but the sentence depicting the stated main idea was "too long". This also showed a lack of understanding of the stated main idea when there was no reference to length of answers during the teaching. This also pointed to the fact that students come with preconceived ideas and these need to be dispelled from the beginning. For this question, 90% of the participants were correct.

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As for the Experiment group, 25 students recorded correct answers and like the Control group, there were students with incomplete answers -two students, who wrote incomplete sentences. When asked why they wrote incomplete sentences when they were told earlier, during the teaching time, that answers must be in complete sentences, they were hesitant to say anything, with one just saying “confused”. Hence 92 % were correct, making the statistics not significant in comparison with the Control Group.

As for the Implied Main Idea, there were three questions and this was averaged to get the total correct answers for this category. The Control Group comprising 33 students, showed only 21 students with the correct answers. Hence, 63% got this correct. The Experiment group scored 26 correct answers out of a total of 27. Hence, 92% got this answer correct. This was a significant difference, between the two groups, in comparison to the previous headings on Topic and stated main idea.

One of the reasons for this is the fact that Implied Main Idea is not an easy concept and requires greater understanding. The conclusion that the researchers have drawn is that the TAWA tool was a success in getting this lesson across to the students. Students were asked at random on how they managed to get this question correct. 12 replied along the lines that the TAWA Tool was helpful, 15 replied that the TAWA Tool reconfirmed what they learnt in the normal lesson and 13 replied that the TAWA Tool made them understand the concept much better than the normal class routine. This also requires more probing to confirm the reasons mentioned above.

As for the Major and Minor Supporting Details, both groups recorded similar results – 92% 96% correct answers. This also made the researchers think that these two aspects were not a major area of difficulty for the students. When the researcher spoke to random students from both groups, their answers reverberated along the lines of “ not so difficult like implied main idea”. This also brought to the fore front that Implied main idea was a concept that needed additional working and opened up a space to add on to this section.

Finally the ‘type of category’ of supporting detail also scored a high with no significant differences in the two groups. Once again, the echoes from the students in both groups were that this was not difficult to categorize.

When asked at the end of the test, what the students would like added to the tool, they mentioned “ more examples”, “more exercises with answers”.

From the reported findings, it is clear that Implied main idea needs greater attention in order to facilitate better understanding of this concept and also to provide more examples and exercises with answers for this. There is room for improving the tool and more categories need to be tested and interviews conducted with the students to get to the core of this study.

Meanwhile, the Questionnaire data showed that 27 out of the 27 students in the Experiment group enjoyed the TAWA tool, as per the first question, where the rating scale of no 1 “very much” was scored. This could be due to the fact that these students are digital natives and this may be a preferred choice for many. However, this needs to be probed further to get confirmation. As for the second question on the preference to learn using the TAWA Tool instead of the teacher teaching scored mixed responses. 20 chose no 2 on the scale of “quite a lot”, 4 chose no 3 “yes” and 3 did not answer the question. The researchers will probe further on this. As for the fourth question, on the ‘completeness’ of the TAWA tool, all 27 chose the scale of no 3 “yes” and this could be attributed to the fact that they were only exposed to part of the tool and were unsure of how ‘complete’ the tool was. Similarly, as for the last question on the effectiveness of the exercises and answer key, all 27 mentioned that they had not gone through the entire tool to be able to answer this. This was an honest response from the students and an eye opener for the researchers to ensure that questions are reasonably framed, hence reduce the anomalies and limitations of the study.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, this innovation is an excellent effort in providing an apparent reference to students to work on the Written Analysis across all courses, not specifically to English courses only. This product also helps the lecturers to have a standard and simple guide to teaching students, especially in the online classroom. With this toolkit, learning and producing Written Analysis can be made possible regardless of time and place, despite students’ high quality of output. With this innovation, the Written Analysis skills can be accelerated and analysing text is made easy. It is hoped that future studies can explore the integration of augmented reality or AR in learning critical reading and writing skills to motivate students to understand the concepts of critical thinking. The next stage of this innovation is to further improve the content of the toolkit.

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Figure 1: Introduction to TAWA



Figure 2 : Intoruction to Written Analysis

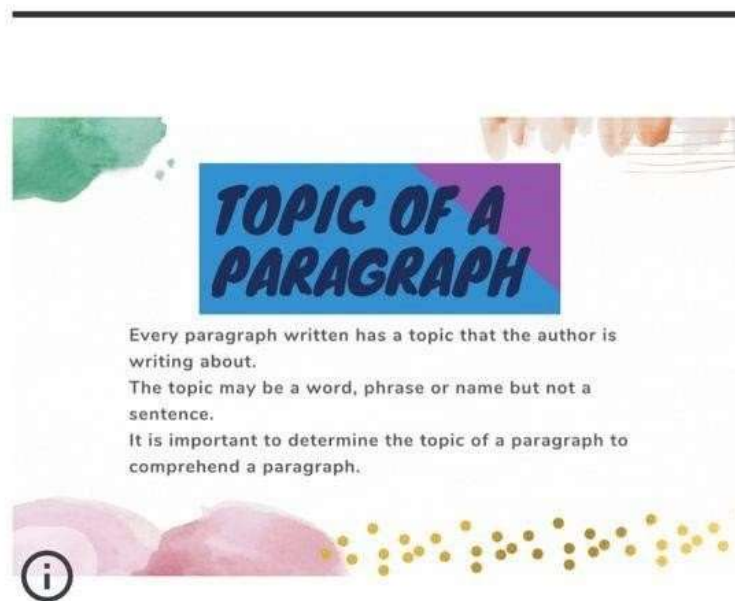


Figure 3: Sample Topic and Notes



MAIN IDEA



SUPPORTING DETAILS

Figure 4: Sample Topics



Figure 5: Sample Notes

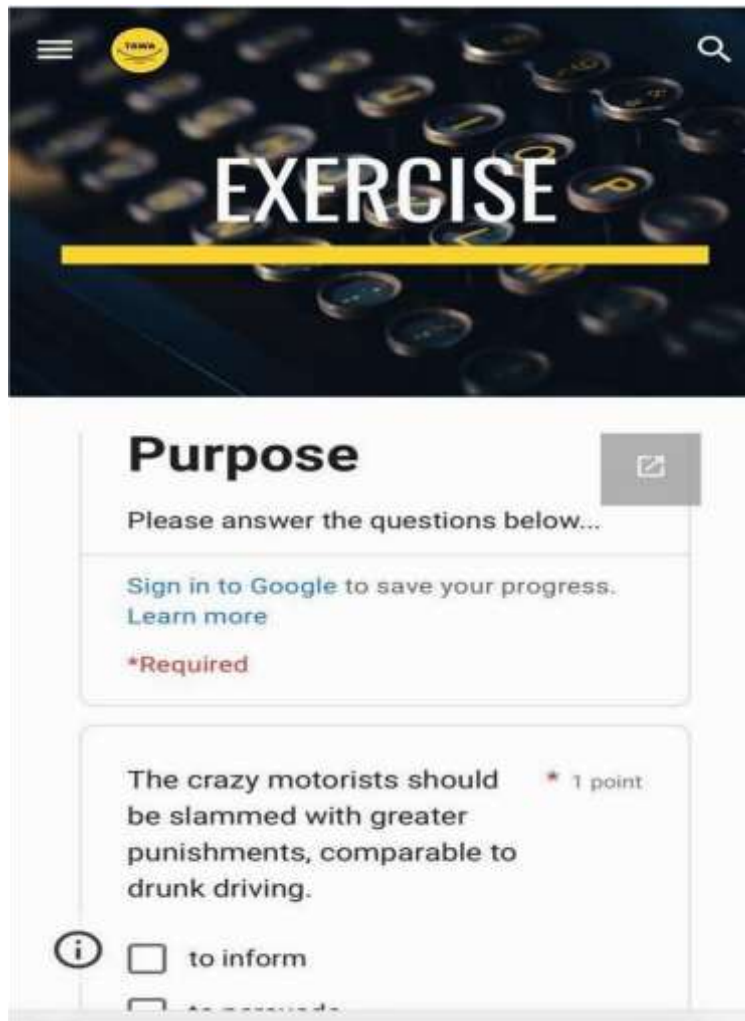


Figure 6: Sample Exercise



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