ISELT 100
Interdisciplinary Studies in English Language Teaching

Teaching ESL/EFL Writing Skill Website Evaluation: The Purdue Online Writing Lab and Pro Writing Aid

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10.22080/iselt.2023.25121.1049

Received
July 1, 2023
Accepted
November 1, 2023
Available online
February 3, 2024

Keywords:
Writing skill, Website Evaluation, Purdue Online Writing Lab, Pro Writing Aid

Abstract

The use of technology has recently become an indispensable part of any educational program. Second and foreign language learning and teaching are increasingly being integrated with computers and mobile software. The importance assigned to the role of English language learning (ELL) software and websites has been even more highlighted in online classrooms, after the COVID-19 pan-demic, where teachers and students did not have a face-to-face interaction. One of the language skills which seems to be negatively affected by the lack of face-to-face interaction between teachers and learners is writing. Among various technology-assisted tools, websites can be effectively used as a source for im-proving L2 writing skills. However, not all websites encompass suitable content for developing learners' ESL/EFL writing skills. Therefore, it seems to be a logical concern to guide the students in both selecting and implementing the most relevant and, at the same time, efficient websites for teaching writing skill. Evaluating such websites is one way to respond to this concern. For this purpose, this study aims at evaluating two of the widely used websites specially designed to develop and improve learners' L2 writing skills: The Purdue Online Writing Lab and Pro Writing Aid. Moreover, the two websites were compared with each other in order to introduce the strengths and weaknesses of each website. The results of such an evaluation would be helpful for both teachers and learners in selecting the most efficient websites for improving their writing skill based on their purposes and practical needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology has become an integral part of various educational programs. Computers and mobiles are increasingly enhancing opportunities for learning in various educational contexts. As stated by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) technology provides teaching resources and brings learning experiences to the learners' world. Computer-based activities provide learners with rapid information and appropriate materials (Gençlter, 2015; Tomlinson, 2009). The development of computer technology and the internet has had considerable effects on the field of ESL/EFL

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teaching and learning. Web 2.0 technologies which "encompass the growing collection of new and emerging Web-based tools" (Solomon & Schrum, 2007, p. 13) have paved the way for new forms of teaching and learning experiences. Various Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, and social networking have provided new opportunities for learners to use and learn English both in and out of the classroom environment. Because of the developing nature of Web 2.0 technologies, the English language teaching market is constantly changing to be able to respond to the new demands of consumers for more personalized and flexible services and products (British Council, 2018, cited in Aguayo & Ramirez, 2020).

Due to the widespread use of technology and internet-based computer applications, many L2 learners today are already familiar with and have experienced online language learning activities. Many ESL/EFL teachers also offer students to make use of the internet for doing relevant language learning activities. By using technology, many authentic materials can be provided to L2 learners and they can be motivated during learning (Ahmadi & Reza, 2018). Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) programs can guide the students in both selecting and implementing the most efficient tools and computer software for ESL/EFL learning purposes. Encouraging students to make use of computers and the internet for language learning is especially important because using computer-based language activities can improve cooperative learning in learners (Harmer, 2007).

Web use has been a paramount issue in recent CALL research and application (Fuentes & Martinez, 2018). In fact, technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) has received increasing attention in studies on language acquisition in the digital age (Healey, 2016). Among the learning resources available through the internet for developing L2 knowledge language learning, websites are considered as tools that offer great possibilities in language learning (Kir & Kayak, 2013; Son, 2005). Due to the widespread expansion of the internet, many EFL/ESL teachers and learners now have access to different English language learning (ELL) websites which provide them with an enormous amount of online information for both teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language. These websites encompass various language learning activities for developing and improving different L2 skills like reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Some of these websites aim at reinforcing a specific skill and some others present activities for two or more integrated skills. Additionally, one of the main purposes of English language learning (ELL) websites is to promote self-directed learning on the part of L2 learners (Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020).

The importance of online and self-directed learning through using ELL websites has been recently highlighted due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of face-to-face interaction between teachers and learners during online EFL classrooms can pose challenges to both teachers and learners in the process of teaching and learning different L2 skills. Using English language learning materials accessible through ELL websites allows learners to skip the imperatives of time, distance, and limits (Fuentes & Martinez, 2018) and paves the way for enhancing language skills through doing online language learning tasks.

One of the concerns regarding online materials and technologies is that they are generally considered more helpful in developing receptive skills – listening and reading – than addressing productive skills – speaking and writing (Kyppö, 2017, cited in Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020). This is in line with Aguayo and Ramírez's (2020) results of the assessment of four English teaching websites for self-directed learning: ESOL Courses, BBC, British Council, and Cambridge English. The assessment of these ELL websites revealed that there are important deficiencies in the evaluation of writing and speaking tasks which causes ignorance of the aspects on which the student must focus after learning. In the same vein, learners are less likely to engage in effective writing tasks after COVID-19 pandemic. Such a condition necessitates the introduction of suitable websites for developing EFL learners' writing skills.

Furthermore, because of the variety of EFL learners' needs, website designers often try to address learners' needs and earn their satisfaction (Shen et al., 2015). However, not all materials are equally reliable or valuable, therefore, language teachers need to be discerning and thoughtful Web users with clear ideas of Web resources quality factors (Son, 2005). With the availability of a variety of L2 learning websites, selecting the most efficient ones among them seems to be an essential task. As stated by Fuentes and Martinez (2018) who focused on designing an assessment framework for evaluating L2 learning websites, it has become problematic for language teachers and learners to find quality websites matching their needs. It is usually recommended that the effectiveness of an ELL website can be determined through evaluation (Castillo & Arias, 2018). Evaluating ELL websites in terms of their effectiveness in teaching different language skills is one way to help students select a suitable website for their English language learning purposes. Such an evaluation is also beneficial for the purpose of website improvement, as a website evaluation that fulfills the goals and desires of its users could specify areas for improvement (Allison et al. 2019).

Due to these concerns and the importance of ELL website evaluation as aforementioned, and for the purpose of helping L2 learners to improve their EFL writing skills in a self-directed manner, this study aims at evaluating two widely used websites specially designed for enhancing writing skills: The Purdue Online Writing Lab (POWL) and Pro Writing Aid (PWA). These two websites are among the top ten mostly used websites for the development of writing skills (according to the search on Google). The two websites provide English language learners with helpful tools to evaluate and develop multiple writing skills. The websites aim to provide learners with online programs to enhance their writing skills by increasing sensitivity to errors in the writing process. The results of such an evaluation would be helpful for learners in selecting an effective website that satisfies their needs for the development of EFL writing skills

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Approaches to CALL Evaluation

According to Castillo and Arias (2018), the effectiveness of a website dedicated to teaching and learning the English language can be determined through evaluation. The evaluation of an ELL website can help learners to understand whether the content found on a particular website can help them achieve their learning goals. The importance assigned to website evaluation could be justified by the fact that if an ELL website lacks some basic qualities of website criteria such as interactivity, ease of use, operability, being user friendly, and providing relevant content, the learners will not make effective use of it and autonomous learning will not take place. In order to get familiar with the general orientations of evaluation of technological and web tools we resort to the distinctions that Levy and Stockwell (2006) observe for CALL evaluation. Levy and Stockwell (2006) distinguished three distinctive forms of CALL software assessment: assessment driven by checklists or forms, evaluation guided by methodological frameworks for language teaching, and evaluation related to second language acquisition (SLA) theory and research-based criteria.

As stated by Hubbard (1996; cited in Fuentes & Martinez, 2018), there are two points of difference between these forms of evaluation. The first is that methodological frameworks mainly focus on describing or characterizing instead of assessing. They evaluate features related to language learning and teaching outside technology. In other words, methodological frameworks allow a detailed top-down analysis of items through the description. The second point of difference is related to SLA-based approach which, unlike the other forms of assessment, is especially based on SLA theories and research and exploits findings from non-CALL research to adjust them to CALL. This is in line with Chapelle's (2001) description of the standards for assessing CALL

material where she emphasized concrete features like those in SLA theory. As stated by Chapelle (2001), some of these features are the purpose of the task, judgmental analysis of software and tasks, empirical analysis of learners' performance, and most importantly, the language learning potential of the software. Therefore, in SLA-based evaluation criteria, the elements are taken from SLA theory and research findings and re-evaluated based on CALL conceptualizations.

Checklists

Assessment checklists have been widely used by reviewers from the earliest phases of CALL (Fuentes & Martinez, 2018). These checklists, like other fields of study, request a response on a Likert scale or simply a yes/no answer. Although there have been some criticisms regarding the evaluation checklists as being biased and restrictive (Hubbard, 1988), some scholars like Susser (2001), have discussed in favor of CALL checklists emphasizing the efficiency of their specific instantiations.

Another aspect of evaluation checklists, as asserted by Susser (2001), relates to the flexibility of these instruments. Susser (2001) believes that we do not need to acknowledge the checklists in their original condition, instead, they can be adjusted and redesigned according to situational purposes. There are various sources for designing items on a checklist. Methodological frameworks and SLA-based approaches as two main sources of evaluation checklist development are introduced below.

Methodological Frameworks

Fuentes and Martinez (2018) state that despite being compatible with a few checklists, methodological frameworks vary from checklists in two points: firstly, methodological frameworks are mostly descriptive rather than judgmental in their structure. Second, the methodological frameworks mainly aim at joining the language and learning implications that happen outside of the innovation of CALL technologies. In other words, methodological frameworks characterize features of language learning and teaching instead of an evaluation of the tool. As stated by Hubbard (1988), rather than asking a specific set of questions, a methodological framework provides a tool through which an evaluator can create his or her own questions or develop some other evaluation scheme. In this sense, a framework provides a description of the components of something - in this case CALL materials - with respect to a particular goal - in this case evaluation (Hubbard, 1988).

To clarify the case, we can observe that the assessment framework components proposed by Hubbard (1988) are compatible and based on Richards and Rodgers's (1982) characterization of language teaching methods in terms of three classes: approach, design, and procedure. The approach refers to the hidden theories of language and language learning; the design is compatible with the assumptions of the method and includes the general and particular goals of the method, the syllabus model, and the role of teachers, learners, and materials. In order to depict the key components of assessment, Hubbard (1988) adjusted the approach, design, and procedures and classified them into learner fit, teacher fit, and operational description.

SLA-based approaches

The underlying idea of SLA-based approaches for developing software assessment checklists is that since teaching languages through software is a type of language teaching, it is sensible to construct the checklists based on suggestions from second language acquisition theory or research. Consequently, as described by Fuentes and Martinez (2018), the SLA-based approach takes discoveries from non-CALL areas and translates them into the CALL context.

Different scholars have tried to develop CALL evaluation criteria based on this approach. An example is Underwood's (1984) communicative approach to CALL in which findings from

research in communicative theory came to form 13 criteria for describing communicative CALL. The criteria later turned into an accepted assessment checklist. Other similar studies (like Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999) have tried to organize evaluation designs based on SLA theories and research regarding ideal language learning and teaching situations.

One of the famous CALL assessment models based on SLA-based approach was presented by Chapelle (2001) who worked in the field of computer applications in second language acquisition (CASLA). In general, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) as well as computer-based language testing, and computer-based SLA research are subsumed under CASLA. Based on this model, Chapelle (2001) offers five standards for assessing CALL:

1. CALL evaluation is situation-specific;
2. CALL should be evaluated both judgmentally and empirically;
3. CALL evaluation criteria should come from instructed SLA theory and research;
4. The criteria should be applied relative to the purpose of the CALL task; and
5. The central consideration should be language learning potential.

Various CALL software can be evaluated based on the principles of these assessment approaches. However, as aforementioned, SLA-based approach to CALL evaluation is considered to be more applicable as it relates the findings of SLA research to the CALL context. Various scholars have used these approaches to design checklists for assessing different aspects of technology use in English language learning and teaching. These checklists present multiple items for evaluating software and web tools used for learning English as a second or foreign language. Some of these assessment criteria are particularly designed for evaluating mobile language learning applications or computer software and websites. In accordance with the purpose of this study in regard to the evaluation of ELL websites as an important and widely used source for self-directed learning, we now turn to focus specifically on various evaluation criteria proposed for assessing ELL websites.

Assessing English Language Learning Websites

The importance of assessing ELL websites is highlighted when we see that only a few studies have concentrated on assessing language learning sites (Fuentes & Martinez, 2018). Another concern regarding the evaluation of ELL websites is that such evaluation seems crucial because we do not see any formal editorial process regarding the content of the language learning websites. As asserted by Shen et al. (2015), anyone can write just anything and post it online for public consumption. As a result, this leads to a point where in Kartal's (2005) words most language sites do exclude all the advantages provided by the internet. Kartal (2005) asserts that these sites offer a "restricted pedagogical methodology" which is decreased to simply presenting self-correcting activities like multiple choice questions, true or false items, and fill in the blanks. Furthermore, these sites do not reflect pedagogical models and learning theories and more importantly, goals, levels, and the target audience are not mentioned (Kartal, 2005). As previously mentioned, learning websites that do not meet certain standards and lack the essential and relevant components can not satisfy learners' needs and do not lead to self-directed and autonomous learning. Also, as stated by Aguayo and Ramírez (2020) regarding the importance of manipulation of evaluation criteria, non-compliance with the evaluated items leads to a deficient experience for independent users, unable to exploit all possibilities of the website due to the technical limitations they may encounter. Due to these concerns, the assessment approaches reviewed in this section are mainly related to website genres.

One of the oldest methods of evaluating a website is Jacob Nielsen's usability heuristics (Duggirala, 2016) developed in the 1990s. Nielsen's heuristic evaluation emphasizes a website's

ability to communicate with users in a language that is understandable to them and does not lead them into confused states. This heuristic evaluation consists of 10 principles for evaluating websites and aims at objectively evaluating the user experience on digital platforms (Duggirala, 2016). The principles include visibility of system status, the match between the system and the real world, user control and freedom, consistency, and standards, error prevention, recognition rather than recall, flexibility and efficiency of use, and aesthetic and minimalist design.

Another criteria framework for assessing ELL websites was proposed by Nelson (1998). Nelson's assessing framework contains four sections: a) purpose which refers to intended goals, uses, and audiences, b) pedagogy that is related to instructions, aspects of multimedia, interactivity, and communicativeness, c) design/construction that encompasses general web design principles including appearance, navigation, load speed, etc., and d) description which refers to general description and relevant comments about the site.

Chapelle (2001), following the previously mentioned standards for assessing CALL, suggests an arrangement of six general criteria for assessing the adequacy and efficiency of a CALL tool for supporting language acquisition. The six criteria are:

1. Language learning potential: the degree of opportunity presents for beneficial focus on form;
2. Learner fit: the amount of opportunity for engagement with language under appropriate conditions given learner characteristics;
3. Meaning focus: the extent to which learners' attention is directed toward the meaning of the language;
4. Authenticity: the degree of correspondence between the learning activity and target language activities of interest to learners out of the classroom;
5. Positive Impact: the positive effects of the CALL activity on those who participate in it; and
6. Practicality: the adequacy of resources to support the use of the CALL activity.

As we see, this model is mainly learner-centered and tries to assess a website based on the facilities it provides for learner engagement and interaction with the learning materials provided. Additionally, most criteria of this framework reflect a task-based, integrationist language teaching approach (Fuentes & Martinez, 2018).

In a comprehensive study, Allison et al. (2019) did a meta-analysis to review the existing globally accepted models of evaluating websites. The strong point of this study is that it presents a comprehensive review and summary of a great number of studies on website evaluation that can be used for designing new evaluation frameworks. In this meta-analysis, Allison et al. (2019) identified 69 relevant studies and explored the criteria for evaluating websites in each study. The identified criteria included:

1. Usability (i.e., ease of use), which is how much a website can be used to achieve given goals. It involves "navigation, effectiveness, and efficiency" (Alison et al., 2019, p. 6). In fact, the ease of use is determined by a highly interactive website, hence a better user experience ensures the website's popularity (Shen et al., 2015).
2. Content, regarding a website's understandability, completeness, accuracy, relevancy, and timeliness.
3. Functionality in regard to a website's links, speed, security, and compatibility with devices and browsers.
4. Web design that includes features, such as media usage, search engines, help resources, originality of the website, site map, multi-language capability, and maintainability.

5. Appearance, including layout, font, colors, and page length
6. Interactivity in which the option for feedback, comments, email, forum discussion boards, FAQs, consumer services, and background music is available.
7. Satisfaction with its usefulness, entertainment, and look and feel pleasure.
8. Loyalty, which indicates a website's first impression.

From another perspective, Kelly (2000) proposes a set of elements that should be considered when outlining a site for ESL students. The elements include:

- usability by a wide audience as possible
- speed of loading and displaying
- ease of use (ease of navigation and reading)
- usefulness (the site should fulfill a need)
- integrity and professionalism (honesty, accuracy, respect for copyrights, indicating
- the date of the last update, a contact address, …)
- wise and effective use of "cutting-edge technology"

Aguayo and Ramírez (2020) proposed an arrangement of criteria for evaluating the technical quality of ELL websites. They focused on the functionality and usability features of ELL websites which are the main characteristics of the technical dimension of a website. The functionality issues include navigation, adequacy of technology, interactive functionality, and accuracy of technology for the specific purpose. Furthermore, the usability sub-categories are presented as intelligibility, ease of use, operability, and design. Each of these issues is subdivided into detailed components which aim at evaluating different technical features of language learning websites. The important features like hyper-textuality and interactivity of websites are among the features evaluated in Aguayo and Ramírez's (2020) model. According to Aguayo and Ramírez (2020), Hyper-textuality might be regarded as the most defining characteristic of functionality in the web medium as it represents the basic and most important distinction between traditional textual genres and web genres. Hyper-textuality makes it possible for a user to follow different directions when reading, navigating, or using web content (Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020). Moreover, interactivity which mainly applies to autonomous learning context depicts a digital learning environment as interactive processes between the learner and the learning environment (i.e. websites) (Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020). The other essential feature of functionality, the accuracy of technology for specific purpose, determines the extent to which the technology exploited in the website is particularly relevant and helpful for teaching a specific language skill.

Son (2005) also proposes 15 criteria for classification and assessment of (ESL/EFL) websites. Each criterion is evaluated on a five-point Likert scale. The criteria in Son's (2005) model evaluate various features of ELL websites including the accuracy, usefulness, organization, navigation, authenticity, and communication of websites. Also, the model requires the evaluators to give an overall rating to the intended website by choosing a category from *very poor* (1) to *excellent* (5).

Sabri (2010) proposes an assessment approach for assessing a grammar site. Based on this approach, two methods of heuristic and exact evaluation of a grammar site are used. The approach contains a framework of assessment criteria and a pragmatic ease of use test of the site. The main segments investigated in Sabri's (2010) approach (as stated by Fuentes & Martinez, 2018), are Website description, website ergonomy (interface, navigation, learning path), usability test (type of difficulties encountered while running tasks), and complementary tools (dictionaries, translators, etc.).

As we consider, these and other similar studies (Kartal, 2005; Liu, Liu & Hwang, 2011; Hubbard, 2011) propose different arrangements of criteria for assessing English as a second and

foreign language (ESL, EFL) websites. Many features across these evaluation frameworks have similar purposes and function to evaluate certain aspects of ELL websites in a similar way. However, in spite of sharing several features in common, we should also take note of different orientations of these criteria. Each assessment criterion analyzes particular aspects of ELL websites in a different way while focusing on certain fundamental standards. These standards are related to basic aspects of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) and different components of Web 2.0 technologies. Moreover, a worth noting point in regard to choosing a particular assessment model is that we should determine which features of it can help us in effectively evaluating a particular language learning website. Regarding the literature, evaluating ELL websites can be considered a useful tool to help foreign language learners and teachers to select suitable websites according to their practical needs. In particular, in Iran, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many language classes have been and are being held online. Such a condition has made L2 learners feel more need for using suitable ELL websites to enhance their language skills. The present study intended to show how the evaluation of two writing websites might assist both EFL learners and teachers.

3. METHOD

Instruments and procedure

The first step in evaluating the websites for teaching writing skills was to select the assessment criteria. In this study, Son's (2005) model was selected for categorizing and evaluating intended websites (see Table 1). Son (2005) asserts that his language learning website review form is based

Table 1: Son's (2005) Website Evaluation Checklist

Items	Descriptions
1. Purpose	Is the purpose clear? Is the content in line with the purpose? Is the Website appropriate for its targeted learner?
2. Accuracy	Is the content accurate? Are spelling and grammar accurate?
3. Currency	Is the Website current? Is the Website updated regularly?
4. Authority	Is there information on the author? Is the author well-recognized for his or her work?
5. Loading speed	Does the Website download fast? Do the content pages download efficiently?
6. Usefulness	Does the Website provide useful information? Are the language activities or tasks useful?
7. Organization	Is the Website well organized and presented? Is the Website interesting to look at and explore? Are screen displays effective?
8. Navigation	Is the Website easy to navigate? Are on-screen instructions easy to follow? Is it easy to retrieve information? Are hyperlinks given properly?
9. Reliability	Is the Website free of bugs and breaks? Is the Website free of dead links?
10. Authenticity	Are the learning materials authentic? Are authentic materials provided in appropriate contexts?
11. Interactivity	Is the Website interactive? Are methods for user input effectively employed?
12. Feedback	Is feedback on learner responses encouraging? Is error handling meaningful and helpful?
13. Multimedia	Does the Website make effective use of graphics, sound, and color? Is the level of audio quality, and the scale of graphics or video display appropriate for language learning?
14.Communication	Can the user communicate with real people online through the Website? Is online help available?
15. Integration	Can the learning materials be integrated into a curriculum? Does the content fit with curricular goals?

on a critical analysis of some other famous website evaluation guidelines and criteria including (as cited in Son, 2005), Tate and Alexander (1996), Bell (1998), Davis (2000), Joseph (1999), Kelly (2000), McKenzie (1997), Nelson (1998), Seguin (1999), and Schrock (1996). The review form requires administrative information such as the title of the site, its URL, language activities/skills, and target audience. Additionally, it contains a part for a site description. As shown in Table 1, Son's (2005) evaluation criteria contain 15 items. The reviewers evaluate each item as "Very Unsatisfactory", "Unsatisfactory", "Uncertain", "Satisfactory" or "Very Satisfactory". The definition of each criterion is presented in Table 1.

Furthermore, the form asks reviewers to give an overall rating for the website by choosing from five options: Very Poor (Not recommended at all), Poor (Not appropriate), Adequate (Acceptable with reservation), Good (Appropriate for use), and Excellent (Highly recommended). The evaluation checklist was sent to and received from the reviewers through a Google form link.

The Reviewed Websites

The two websites evaluated through Son's (2005) evaluation model were the Purdue Online Writing Lab (POWL) and Pro Writing Aid (PWA). These two websites are among the top ten mostly used websites for learning EFL writing skills. The two websites have been designed to be used by ESL/EFL writers at all levels and for general purposes. Purdue University's online writing lab (Purdue OWL) is an online writing center to help English language learners improve their writing skills by providing them with writing resources and guides. Through a navigation bar, the website provides some writing guidelines in the form of specified sections and sub-sections about a particular issue in writing.

The main sections of the website include general writing, research and citation, avoiding plagiarism, graduate writing, subject-specific writing, and job search writing. Each of the sections contains multiple sub-sections which present related instructions on a specific issue in writing. For instance, the main sub-sections of the general writing section include writing style, the writing process, academic writing, common writing assignments, mechanics, grammar, punctuation, rhetoric, personal correspondence, community-engaged writing, and general writing FAQs. The website also includes another navigation bar that presents instructions regarding different writing styles like MLA guide, APA guide, and Chicago guide. The website includes a section for writing exercises (OWL Exercises) in which various exercises are presented with correct answers available for learners on a separate page to check their answers. Each Exercise section contains various related subsections. The main sections range from grammar, punctuation, and spelling exercises to sentence structure and sentence style exercises.

Finally, the website includes a section for proofreading learners' papers and written documents through which learners can upload their papers or type their sentences and get a free online expert check on their writing. The errors are underlined and suggestions for correction are provided.

Pro Writing Aid (PWA) website provides a text editing tool which, in addition to the regular spell-checking and other grammar tools, checks the entered content for usage of vague or abstract words, alliteration analysis, and more.

Seven EFL teachers, including the writer, who had over ten years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language, independently evaluated the two websites based on Son's (2005) framework. Four teachers held MA and three teachers were Ph.D. students or candidates in TEFL. The results of the teachers' evaluation were analyzed in order to compare the two writing websites. The strong and weak points of each website were reported based on the results of the study.

4. RESULT

The results of the evaluation of the two websites are presented in Table 2. The seven evaluators independently assessed each website based on Son's (2005) framework. In addition to rating each criterion, the evaluators give an overall rating to each website.

As indicated in Table 2, for Pro Writing Aid (PWA) website (picture 1), the reviewers gave the highest mark (4.7) to purpose, interactivity, and feedback. Furthermore, the reviewers were highly satisfied with the accuracy, usefulness, organization, and reliability of PWA giving each of these criteria a mean score of 4.5. They also evaluated the website as having a highly acceptable loading speed (4.4). However, the currency (2.8), authenticity (2.4), integration (2.2), and communication (3) aspects of this website were given the lowest marks by the reviewers. PWA was also rated positively in terms of the navigation (4) features of the website.

Table 2: Web Site Review Results

	POWL	PWA
Purpose	4.2	4.7
Accuracy	4.2	4.5
Currency	3.4	2.8
Authority	4.2	4
Loading speed	4	4.4
Usefulness	4.1	4.5
Organization	3.2	4.5
Navigation	4.4	4
Reliability	4.1	4.5
Authenticity	3.1	2.4
Interactivity	3.2	4.7
Feedback	3.7	4.7
Multimedia	2.1	3
Communication	3.4	3
Integration	4.2	2.2
Overall rating	3.7	4.1

Note. POWL: The Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://owl.purdue.edu/);
PWA: Pro Writing Aid (https://prowritingaid.com/).

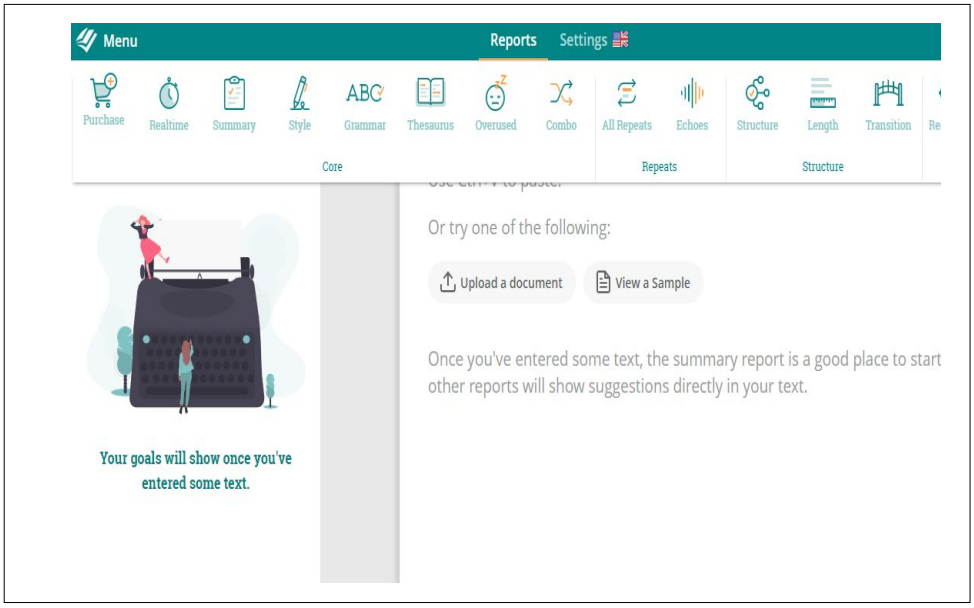

Fig. 1: Pro Writing Aid (https://prowritingaid.com/)

The results of the evaluation (Table 1) show that in the Purdue Online Writing Lab (POWL) website (Fig. 2), navigation (4.4) and integration (4.5) were given the highest marks. The purpose (4.2), accuracy (4.2), authority (4.2), and reliability (4.1) aspects of the website also were rated highly. The lowest scores were given to multimedia (2.1) and authenticity (3.1) features of POWL.

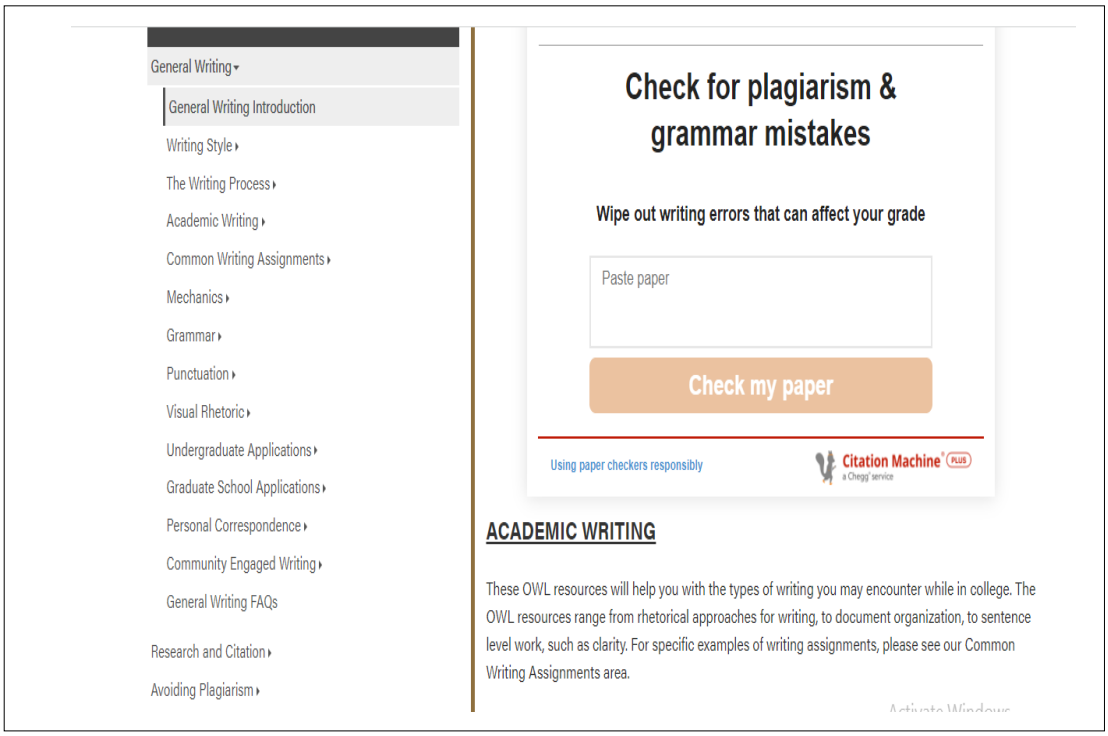

Fig. 2: Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://owl.purdue)

As can be understood from Table 2, the authenticity in both PWA and POWL were given low marks by the reviewers, 2.4 and 3.1 respectively. Additionally, the mark for currency in both websites was relatively low although it was higher in POWL (3.4) than in PWA (2.8). On the other hand, the accuracy, purpose, usefulness, and reliability criteria were rated above 4 in both websites. In terms of the differences between the two websites, the reviewers gave a significantly higher mark to the organization in PWA (4.5) than in POWL (3.2). Also, interactivity and feedback were rated higher in PWA than in POWL (see Table 1). In POWL, currency and authenticity got higher marks compared to PWA, and the integration in POWL (4.2) was rated significantly higher than in PWA (2.2).

Finally, as Table 2 shows, the two websites were rated as appropriate for use (between 3.5 and 4.5), however, the overall rating for PWA (4.1) was higher than POWL (3.7).

5. DISCUSSION

As discussed by Son (2005), in analyzing the results, it should be noted that a rating given to each criterion is more meaningful than the overall rating and the overall rating of an evaluation checklist cannot be a definite measure of evaluation. Therefore, the relative importance of each criterion should be taken into consideration when evaluating each website.

The results of the reviewers' evaluation of the two websites indicated that in most features measured by the checklist, the two websites were considered equally effective and useful. A score above 4 for the two criteria of purpose and accuracy for both websites indicates that the two websites can be acceptable sources for learners' writing improvement. This result is also reflected in the average score of the usefulness criterion which is higher than 4 for both websites.

However, the evaluation results showed that in some criteria the two websites are different. In the case of interactivity, for instance, the results showed that PWA is considered to be more interactive than POWL. It means that the learners can interact more easily and effectively with the content of PWA website. This issue can be attributed to the design of the text editing section of this website through which learners can easily edit and improve their text using various colored icons and figures available. Possibly, for the same reason, the organization of PWA was also rated higher than POWL although POWL contains more sections and sub-sections with a more variety of writing skill lessons.

One important aspect of ELL websites is the capability of integrating them into the content of a curriculum. It would be more functional for both teachers and learners if the content of an ELL website could be used effectively to enhance the content of the course. The results of this study showed that POWL was significantly rated higher than PWA in terms of this aspect. As mentioned above, this result can be attributed to the variety of writing issues in the form of main sections and subsections available in the navigation bar of this website. Various issues of general writing like writing styles, mechanics, grammar, punctuation, and other related issues can make POWL a suitable website for improving the content of a writing curriculum.

Another important concern in evaluating an ELL website is the multimedia features of it. The results of this study showed that in terms of using multimedia features, PWA and particularly POWL did not get a high score compared to the other highly rated features. This result, however, can be considered normal as we may discuss that the two websites are specifically designed for developing writing skill. The scores for this aspect in the two websites can be attributed to the graphics and color used in the two websites. It should also be noted that PWA includes videos for introducing some writing issues.

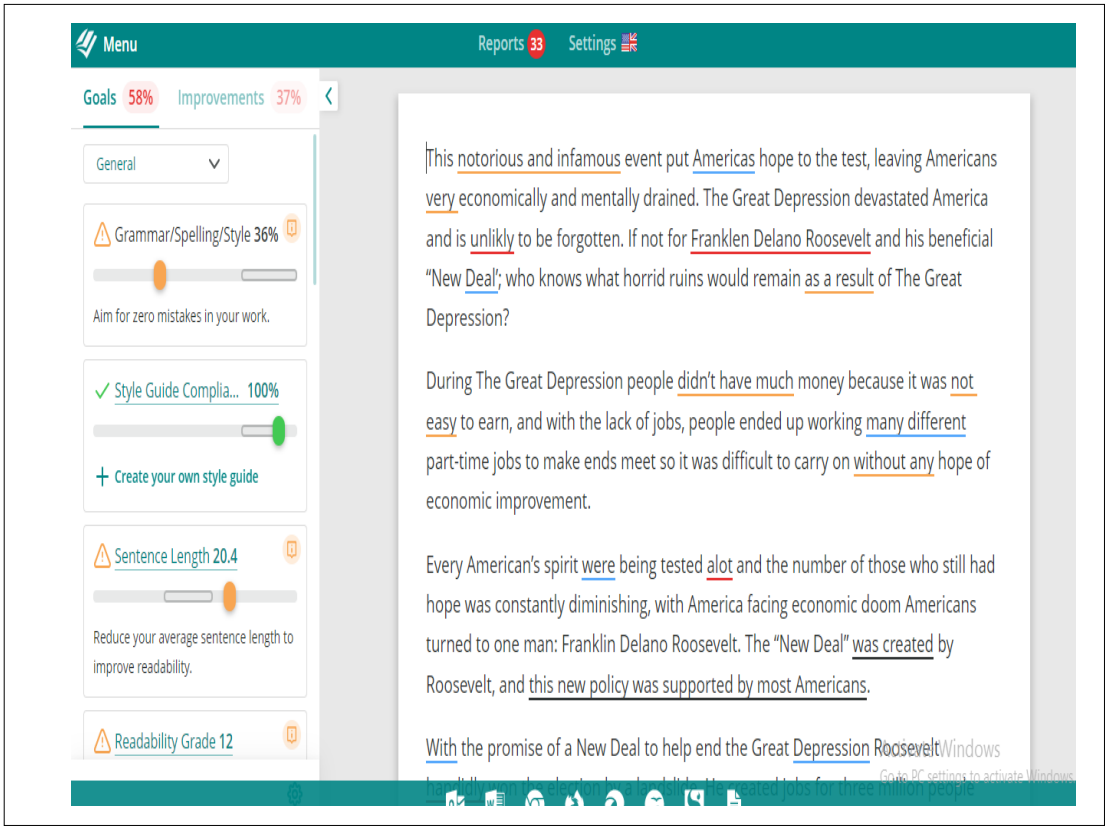

Fig. 3: Pro Writing Aid Text Editing Program

Finally, regarding feedback, the analysis showed that PWA (4.7) can provide more efficient feedback on learners' writing (Fig. 3) compared to POWL (3.7). This can be due to the more user-friendly environment provided by graphical figures of text editing programs in PWA. Using the proofreading and text correcting programs in both websites, the users can receive instant feedback on their self-written texts.

6. CONCLUSION

Reviewing and evaluating ELL websites can be considered a useful way for helping ESL/EFL learners and teachers to select suitable websites according to their practical needs. This can be even more crucial in flipped or online classrooms. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, many ESL/EFL classes have been and are being held online. Such a condition has made L2 learners feel more need for using suitable ELL websites to enhance their language skills. Writing, as a productive skill, might be less effectively practiced in online classrooms as teachers and learners do not interact directly with each other as in face-to-face classrooms. This is in line with Kyppö's (2017), (as cited in Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020) comment that most online and technological resources are considered more helpful in improving receptive skills like listening and reading than productive skill (i.e. speaking and writing).

It became evident from the evaluation results that the two websites reviewed in this study can be used to improve students' writing abilities. Consulting the assessment results of the specified criteria of the two websites, teachers and learners can fairly identify the strong points of each website and systematically use them in favor of improving certain skills in writing. Whether or not the teaching materials in the reviewed websites have been introduced and designed by known

experienced authors is an important aspect of such use. According to this study, the review results indicated that the two websites have been authorized by well-recognized authors in this field. However, as aforementioned, L2 learners and instructors can make different use of each website according to their levels and local needs. Moreover, the choice of a suitable writing website might differ considering the purpose and nature of a language learning course. The important concluding point is that teachers should continuously monitor and evaluate the students' use of such websites in order to assess their efficiency and make necessary decisions in advising learners on how to implement different sections of those websites.

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