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Student Perspective of ACE Website to Complete Presentations in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

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Abstract

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) was adopted by most higher learning institutions when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. Its implementation at an unprecedented speed and haste caused difficulties for students, especially those who were not digitally savvy. As such, the ACE website was created to help students overcome their difficulties, especially with regard to completing their English course assignments. It has tools and apps and a step-by-step user guide to create interactive and attractive presentations. Thus, this paper aims to investigate the university students' perspectives on ACE to help them complete their English course assignments during ODL. A pre-ACE and a post-ACE online questionnaire were administered using non-probability sampling and quota sampling. The total sample size was 186 respondents who completed both the pre-and post-survey. The findings show that most students have positive perceptions of the ability of ACE to help them prepare interactive and attractive presentations. More students rated themselves better after using ACE to imbed slide presentations with video and audio. Post ACE data revealed that students have become better at preparing presentations using PowerPoint and Canva. After using ACE, many students seem to have shifted to the VN video editing app from previously using Filmora. Overall, the study indicates ACE has helped students prepare better presentations for English courses.

Keywords: Open and Distance Learning (ODL), PowerPoint, Canva, Digital tools, Student presentation

1. Introduction

When Corona Virus (COVID 19) hit the world in 2020, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that 150 countries globally, including Malaysia, were affected (UNESCO, 2020). Many educational institutions were closed temporarily in March 2020 due to the pandemic. This resulted in the implementation of alternative teaching methods. This new teaching approach, also known as online distance learning (ODL), was adopted by many academic institutions worldwide. ODL seems to provide learning empowerment for both teachers and students as they can now communicate in a virtual classroom from any part of the world using technology and the Internet. While technology was already being utilised in the classroom before the pandemic, having no face to face meeting with the lecturer or facilitator was deemed a challenge to most students (Shanthi et al., 2021). This is made more difficult as the expectations of assignments and projects standard have risen. This is because students need to show creativity and utilise the various tools and technology in completing their assignments. As students are the generation X, Y and Z of this millennium, it is assumed that they possess the knowledge and skills to produce quality work by using various learning platforms, apps and technology to produce quality assignments and projects. However, in reality, many students grapple with producing quality assignments that meet the benchmark set by their lecturers (Nalini Arumugam et al., 2021) (Shanthi et al., 2021).

According (Mseleku, 2020), as online learning depends entirely on technological devices and the Internet, teachers and students may face many challenges. These include, among others, academics, and students' difficulties in adjusting to the online mode; connectivity, network,

and Internet issues; unconducive physical space and environment; and lack of teaching and learning resources (Mseleku, 2020). However, this is the 21st century, where technology is used more in daily life, and the academic world also utilises technology in teaching and learning, research, and collaborations. Students need to be prepared for the workforce and therefore need to possess ICT skills in four areas: collaboration and teamwork; creativity and imagination; critical thinking and problem solving (Puthong, 2015). As such, the ODL platform is the best way to get students to practice using ICT and familiar apps embedded into their assignments. Among the popular apps are PowerPoints, YouTube videos, Canva, Flipbook, Filmora and Prezi for presentations.

Students confront new obstacles and issues due to the transition to a total online learning platform (Al-Kumaim et al., 2021). Students were introduced to a plethora of new tools and programmes for learning on a completely digitalised platform (Jandrić & Hayes, 2020) (Shanthi et al., 2021). This contributed to students experiencing stress because they had to become acquainted with the many instruments utilised for various disciplines (Shanthi et al., 2021). Completing some tasks, which now had to be interactive with video and audio embedded in their presentations, added to the stress of online learning. There is evidence that kids were falling behind in their academic performance because of a lack of computer literacy abilities (Jandrić & Hayes, 2020) (Fernando et al., 2020). To help students with the digital skills needed to complete their English course assignment a website called "ACE: Apps to Ace Assignments" was created by the authors.

This study investigates feedback on the interactive ACE apps implemented in English courses. ACE was constructed as a tool to help educators and students to enhance their teaching and learning in a local university. The main objective of this research was to assess the change in students' self-reported ability scores after using ACE. Furthermore, the aims of this study were as follows: access student's experience in completing their online assignments, especially during ODL; to identify student's preference for video editing tools; to identify student's preference for record presentation and upload in a learning platform and to identify student's preference for tools/apps guidance to prepare better assignments.

Therefore, when the physical classroom becomes difficult to be conducted, remote learning is the preferred choice. As such, ACE may become a tool to assist students in in their learning journey without having technology getting in their way. ACE helps facilitate and guide students to complete their English assignments such as role-plays, forums, group discussions, and oral presentations by using free and readily available online tools and apps to complete and upload assignments into online learning platforms such as Google Classroom or Microsoft teams.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Completing Assignments During ODL

The current generation of students is known as 'digital natives' as they have grown up with technology. On the other hand, teachers are “digital immigrants”, and because they may not have grown up with technology or the Internet at that time, they may encounter many barriers

and fears to incorporating technology within their classrooms. Therefore, teachers need to embrace the changes brought about by the infusion of technology in the classroom, especially the current trend of using online platforms for teaching and learning. In her study, Arumugam (Nalini Arumugam et al., 2021) had 20 educators with more than 10-12 years of teaching experience and conducted online teaching and learning classes. Her respondents revealed that five problems emerged in ODL: isolation, lack of motivation in online teaching, technical difficulties with online teaching tools, time-consuming resources, and work-life balance. Of these, technical difficulties were encountered by both teachers and students. It was reported that students in remote areas experienced poor technology access, which hampered their ODL. Moreover, not all students were digital natives, as some were not technological savvy when handling unacquainted software. On the other hand, the teachers lacked IT knowledge in using the online tools.

The education landscape has changed in that now the buzzword is Education 4.0 and IR 4.0 (Oke & Fernandes, 2020). As such, what are these changes, and what does it entail? Education 4.0 is a response to the needs of IR4.0, where humans and technology are aligned to enable new possibilities in education (Hussin, 2018). Nine trends outline Education 4.0. The fourth trend states that students will be exposed to more hands-on learning through field experiences such as internships, mentoring projects, and collaborative projects, while the seventh trend states that students will be assessed differently, and the conventional platforms to assess students may become irrelevant in future.

Yet another study by Puthong (2015) states that teachers should motivate students to learn by getting them to use different visuals aids in the classroom like YouTube videos, PowerPoint presentations, and student-made posters as it is believed that students in the world of technology prefer learning by doing and learning from different activities. Puthong's (2015) study on 76 students in a university in Thailand studying English for Science and Technology 1 revealed that students could improve their English language skills such as vocabulary, oral presentation, sentence construction, pronunciation and making English conversation by using PowerPoint application. The PowerPoint presentation also improved their confidence as they were guided by it when speaking in front of the class, and they had time to prepare themselves. They also found that PowerPoint enhanced their ICT and creativity skills as well. They were also able to collaborate with their peers on their assignments. Not only did PowerPoint enhance their academic achievement in completing their assignments but also their social skills such as collaboration and teamwork.

Another popular web tool for online assignments is Canva. Canva uses infographics in the form of charts or posters on a specific topic through visuals. In a study on the use of Canva for assignment, Yundayani et al.,(2019) claims that its drag-and-drop format allows for an easy and flexible experiment for its users during their creation process and can be accessed with ease. This makes it a popular tool not only for the tech-savvy students but also for those who are less tech-savvy because of its easy-to-use interface and drag-and-drop image editor, which allows for easy text insertion and is also cost-free. However, Canva has its limitations: Canva does not provide feedback on language editing such as wrong word choices, misspellings, or grammar mistakes.

A study by Banitt et al. (2013) focused on the effects of technology integration on student engagement in the secondary classroom involving 200 students in English, special education, and mathematics courses in grades 8-12 in a university in Minnesota, USA. The study's findings revealed a 5-10% overall increase in student engagement and enthusiasm for lessons involving technology compared to traditional teaching. In addition, in answering the question of being given a choice of completing the same assignment with or without technology, 73% of students reported they would prefer using technology to complete assignments as it is faster, easier to search for answers to questions, more convenient, fun and allows for 'more possibilities or ways to complete an assignment.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that integrating technology in lessons increases student engagement in ODL. Students are more motivated and enthusiastic despite having glitches using technology and apps to complete their learning. Homework completion rates also increased though there may be instances of late submission online beyond the given deadline. However, as new technologies and apps are integrated into the ODL classroom, teachers need to exercise caution and be selective in the types and choices of apps they select for their students to complete their assignments. Students need to be familiar with the usage of apps and at least some demonstration and feedback on how the apps work. It cannot be assumed that students know it all. They may need the time and chance to explore, create and embed the apps into their assignments. Feedback from teachers and instructors is then deemed necessary. Thus, teachers themselves need to embrace technology in ODL to guide and monitor their students' outputs. This echoes the findings of the study by Arumugam (Nalini Arumugam et al., 2021) which states that teachers are ‘digital immigrants”.

3. Method

3.1 Data Source

In this study, the ACE is developed as a methodological approach to aid lecturers and students in teaching and to learn to complete English course assignments. This quantitative study was conducted using a survey approach to determine students' acceptance of ACE. The data was primarily collected through online questionnaires using the Google Form platform. In week 1, prior to the commencement of the semester, students were asked to complete the pre-ACE questionnaire. Then a three-hour workshop was conducted to teach the students on how to use ACE for their classroom activities and assessments at the start of the course. Thus, during the intervention period, students were asked to join the short course on using the ACE. Finally, students took the post ACE questionnaire in week 14 after completing English course assignments.

The questionnaires were divided into Part A, Part B, and Part C. Part A consisted of the demographic profile items formulated using multiple choice type questions, while Part B consisted of ACE items on student's experience in completing their online assignments, especially during ODL using the seven point-Likert Scale type of questions. Part C consisted of students' preferences for video editing tools, recording presentations and uploading in a learning platform, and apps guidance to prepare their assignments.

The online questionnaire was administered using nonprobability sampling, quota sampling. Students filled out a survey in google form, which was then screened and transferred to SPSS version 26 for analysis. The total sample size is 186 respondents based on the online feedback received during the post-survey. The results from this study provided summaries and conclusions about the sample involved, but the results cannot be used to infer to the population.

3.2 Data Analysis

The ACE survey included the three subscales of the skills in Microsoft PowerPoint, CANVA and Flipping book for completing English course assignments. Descriptive statistic was used to identify the shifting trends in students' experience completing their online assignments, especially during ODL. Moreover, means comparison was used to assess the change in students' self-reported ability scores after using ACE. The significance level for all tests was set at a p-value less than 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis for this study is to identify whether there was a difference in students' skills before and after a 14-week use of the ACE module:

Hi: There is a significant difference in student's ability scores before and after using ACE website to prepare presentation for English course.

The assumptions are that the dependent variable should be measured at the ordinal or continuous level. Thus, the summation of items of students' experience in completing their online assignments was used. The independent variable consisting of related groups indicates that the same students are present in both pre- and post-survey.

The paired t-test requires that the dependent variable be approximately normally distributed within each group. However, since both groups' data is not approximately normally distributed, therefore nonparametric Wilcoxon test was used. Also, this nonparametric test does not require a normality assumption, which made it a suitable choice for this study.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

A needs analysis was carried out before the ACE app was introduced to the students. An online questionnaire was distributed to students. The result of the needs analysis is portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Tools/apps guidance to prepare a better assignment

Preference		**Preference (%)**
Do you think you need more guidance/knowledge on using digital tools to enhance your presentation?	Maybe	33.3
	No	5.4
	Yes	**61.3**

Do you think these tools/apps would help you prepare better assignments?	Maybe	12.9
	No	1.1
	Yes	**86.0**
Would you be willing to take a short course (3-4 hours) on using the tools mentioned above?	No	28.0
	Yes	**72.0**

Students indicated they needed more guidance on preparing a presentation, with 61.3% indicating 'Yes' and only 5.5% saying 'No'. When asked if the tools introduced in the ACE app would help them prepare a better assignment, a significant percentage of 86.0% indicated 'Yes', revealing an early indication that the students believed that ACE is a helpful tool to help them prepare assignments for their English courses. Finally, 72.0% of respondents indicated they were willing to take a short course on the tools necessary to prepare presentations for their English courses. Overall, students were keen to learn and incorporate various digital tools with different skills to support their learning process.

4.2 Demographic Profile

A pre-test and post-test study were carried out to ensure that this research has a directionality; to find out if the knowledge to use the different apps in ACE before and after intervention with the training conducted to use ACE and after that the students' use of ACE in learning. The post-test questionnaire was emailed to 361 students who attended and used ACE in class. One hundred eighty-six forms were returned.

Table 2. Demographic profile analysis

Demographic		**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	30	16.1
	Female	156	83.9
Education level	Diploma	86	46.2
	Degree	100	53.8

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents of this study. A total of 186 students completed both the pre- and post-survey questionnaire, with 46.2% of students pursuing the studies at the diploma level and 53.8% were pursuing their degree.

4.3 Students' Experience in Completing Their Online Assignments Using PowerPoint, Canva and Flipbook

This section begins with a brief focus on the shifting trends in students' experience

completing their English online assignments, especially during ODL using Microsoft PowerPoint, Canva and Flipping book. Students' self-reported data from the pre- and post-survey provided a critical outlook on how ACE has helped them complete the English course presentations. Additionally, this test allowed assessing students emerging proficiency before and after using ACE. Overall, the results showed that students fared better during the post-test.

Table 3. Skills in Microsoft PowerPoint

PowerPoint	Rate	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Ability to prepare a presentation	Extremely poor	0.0	0.0
	Very poor	2.2	0.0
	Poor	0.0	0.0
	Average	22.6	10.8
	Good	**43.0**	**47.4**
	Very good	23.7	35.5
	Excellent	8.6	6.5
Ability to prepare a presentation combining slides with audio embedded	Extremely poor	0.0	0.0
	Very poor	1.1	1.1
	Poor	11.8	4.3
	Average	17.2	17.2
	Good	**36.6**	31.2
	Very good	24.7	**34.4**
	Excellent	8.6	11.8
Ability to prepare presentation combining slides and video	Extremely poor	0.0	0.0
	Very poor	3.2	6.5
	Poor	6.5	11.8
	Average	23.7	5.4
	Good	**31.2**	29.0
	Very good	28.0	**36.6**
	Excellent	7.5	10.8
Ability to convert PowerPoint presentations to MP4 format	Extremely poor	3.2	1.1
	Very poor	3.2	0.0
	Poor	15.1	3.2
	Average	21.5	16.1

	Good	**23.7**	**37.6**
	Very good	18.3	25.8
	Excellent	15.1	16.1

Table 3 presents students' ability to use PowerPoint for presentations. The results indicate an improvement as the percentage of students who rated themselves as average to poor (extremely poor, very poor and poor) for preparing PowerPoint presentations reduced from 24.8% (pre-test) to 10.8 % (post-test). The same pattern of improvement can be seen in students' ability to prepare PowerPoint slides embedded with audio (pre-test 30.1%, post-test 22.6%), ability to prepare presentations combining slides and video (pre-test 33.4%, post-test 23.7%). Table 3 also indicates a shift in the students' ability from 'Good' to 'Very good' to prepare a presentation combining slides with audio embedded as well as a shift from ‘Good’ to ‘Very good’ to prepare presentation combining slides and video. Finally, the highest rate of improvement can be seen in their ability to convert PowerPoint presentations to MP4 format (pre-test 43.0%, post-test 20.4%). Although results of students' ability to convert PowerPoint presentations into MP4 format remained in the 'Good' category, the percentage has increased from 23.7% in the pre-test and 37.6% in the post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that after using the ACE app, students were able to prepare better presentations using PowerPoint.

Table 4. Skills in CANVA

Canva	**Rate**	**Pre (%)**	**Post (%)**
Ability to prepare a presentation	Extremely poor	2.2	1.1
	Very poor	9.7	8.6
	Poor	11.8	15.1
	Average	22.6	16.1
	Good	**30.1**	**26.9**
	Very good	17.2	25.8
	Excellent	6.5	6.5
Ability to prepare presentation combining slides with audio embedded	Extremely poor	3.2	1.1
	Very poor	11.8	9.7
	Poor	17.2	17.2
	Average	**29.0**	14.0
	Good	19.4	24.7
	Very good	15.1	**26.9**
	Excellent	4.3	6.5
Ability to prepare	Extremely poor	4.3	2.2

presentation combining sides and video	Very poor	14.0	8.6
	Poor	17.2	19.4
	Average	**24.7**	12.9
	Good	18.3	**26.9**
	Very good	16.1	24.7
	Excellent	5.4	5.4

Table 4 presents students' ability to use Canva for presentations. The results indicate an improvement, as the percentage of students who rated themselves as average to poor (extremely poor, very poor and poor) for preparing the Canva slide presentation reduced from 46.3% (pre-test) to 40.9 %(post-test). The same pattern of improvement can be seen in students' ability to prepare Canva slides embedded with audio (pre-test 61.2%, post-test 42.0%), as well as the ability to prepare presentations combining slides and video (pre-test 60.2%, post-test 43.1%). Therefore, it can be concluded that after using the ACE app, students were able to prepare better presentations using Canva.

Tables 3 and 4 show that students can prepare slides using PowerPoint and Canva, but they lack the skills to embed the slides with audio and video in the presentation. By comparing the data in Tables 3 and 4, it can be concluded that using ACE has improved their ability to prepare interactive slides using PowerPoint compared to Canva (Figure 1).

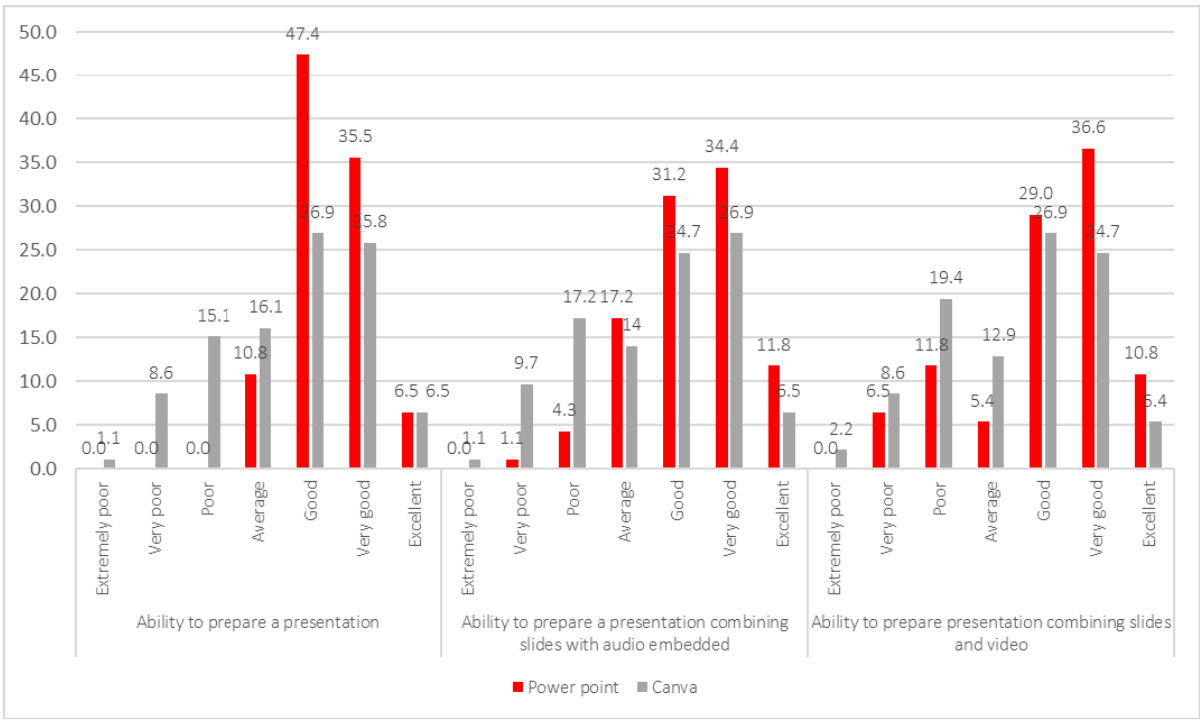

Figure 1. Students' ability to prepare interactive slides using PowerPoint and Canva (Post)

Table 5 shows students' ability to prepare Flipbook presentations. Digital flipbooks are an excellent format for presenting interactive digital portfolios required for some classwork.

Table 5. Skills in Flipping Book

Flipping Book	Rate	Pre (%)	Post (%)
How do you rate your ability to prepare a presentation using Flipbook?	Extremely poor	19.4	8.6
	Very poor	23.7	14.0
	Poor	**26.9**	**31.2**
	Average	21.5	22.6
	Good	6.5	18.3
	Very good	1.1	3.2
	Excellent	1.1	2.2

Table 5 shows students' ability to prepare Flipbook presentations. Though the data shows that before and after using the ACE app, students remained in the 'Poor' category, the percentage has increased from 26.9 % (Pre-test) to 31.2 % (Post-test). Also, the number of students who rated their ability to prepare a Flipbook presentation as average to excellent improved from 30.2% (pre-test) to 47.3% (post-test). This indicates that the ACE app has helped students learn new digital skills in preparing classroom presentations using Flipbook.

4.4 Students' preference for video editing tools.

This section discusses the student's digital skills in editing video and audio. It is sometimes necessary to edit the recorded video with some unnecessary parts removed, thus making the audio or video clip usable and allowing it to be embedded into their slide presentations.

Table 6. Video editing tools

Tools	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Apple iMovie	7.5	6.4
Filmora	25.8	15.1
InShot	32.3	33.3
VN editing video	26.9	35.5
Windows Movie Maker	7.5	9.7

Students were given a chance to work on a few video editing tools in the ACE app, as shown in Table 6. The three most preferred video editing tools before using ACE were InShot (32.3%), VN editing video (26.9%) and Filmora (25.8%); however, after using the tools for the classwork, there is a shift to VN editing tool (35.5%), and a considerable reduction on the

students' preference for Filmora (15.1%).

4.5 Students' Preference on Recording Presentation and Uploading in a Learning Platform

In ODL, students are also required to create and share group or individual presentations with their lecturers. This section follows a discussion of the student's preference for recording presentation and uploading it on a learning platform.

Table 7. Record presentation and upload in a learning platform

Recording/ Upload	**Pre (%)**	**Post (%)**
Google meet	29.0	23.7
Handphone camera	**57.0**	**58.1**
Laptop camera	12.9	5.4
Webex	0.0	1.0
Zoom	1.1	11.8

Table 7 shows students preferred tool to record their presentation before uploading it to the learning platform for their lecturer to evaluate. The results show that the most preferred choice was recording using the handphones before using ACE is 57% while after using ACE is 58.1%. There is a significant increase in the number of students opting for Zoom (11.8%) as a recording tool after using ACE and a decline in the percentage of students using laptops to record their presentations (pre 12.9%, post 5.4%).

Student's preference for tools/apps guidance to prepare a better assignment

4.6 Pre and Post Analysis

The following sections will discuss the pre and post-test to assess the change in students' self-reported ability scores after using the ACE. The Shapiro-Wilk test is more appropriate for small sample sizes of less than 50 samples but can also handle sizes as large as 2000. For this reason, this study uses the Shapiro-Wilk test for assessing normality.

Table 8. Normality test

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p-value
Pre	.984	186	.032
Post	.964	186	.000

The distribution of pre-test score SW (186) = 0.984, p = 0.032 and post-test score SW (186) = 0.964, p = 0.000 are significantly not normally distributed. Since both groups' data is not normally distributed, therefore nonparametric Wilcoxon test was used. Next, the Ranks table (Table 9) provides some interesting data on the comparison of students' ability scores before

(Pre) and after (Post) use of ACE.

Table 9. Ranks

Ranks		No of students	Interpretation
Positive Ranks	Post > Pre	130	Improve
Negative Ranks	Post < Pre	50	Not improve
Ties	Post = Pre	6	No change

Z = -5.295, p = 0.000.

The results indicate that 130 students had a higher ability score than before their use of the ACE. This suggests an improvement in the students' ability after using the ACE as most of them were able to complete their English assessments. The negative ranks for 50 students indicate that the pre-test score is greater than the post-test. However, there were no changes in scores for six students after using ACE. A Wilcoxon signed ranks test showed that a 14-week ACE elicited a statistically significant difference between pre-and post-test (Z=-5.295, p=0.000). This indicates that the ACE is an effective app and can facilitate and guide students to complete their English assignments.

5. Conclusion

Despite the challenges faced in ODL implementation, the opportunity to innovate learning was made available for the students via the ACE app. Findings reveal that university students have shown positive results in using the ACE app to complete their presentations, assignments, and classwork for their English courses during ODL. Students' digital skills while using the ACE app was explored in areas of creating videos, digital portfolios, and creating digital presentations. Some of the tools and apps students used for these tasks include PowerPoint, Canva, Flipbook, and editing tools such as Snapshot, VL, and VLLO. These are the essential digital tools that students need to utilise in order to prepare attractive and interactive digital presentations. Based on the results, it can be concluded that ACE has achieved the objectives of providing a platform that can be a reference point for students, especially those who lack computer literacy. More students rated themselves better after using ACE to imbed slide presentations with video and audio. PowerPoint was more preferred than Canva, even though the post-test revealed that students have become better at preparing presentations using PowerPoint and Canva. After using ACE, many students seem to have shifted to the VN video editing app from previously using Filmora. Where recording student presentation is concerned, students still prefer to record using their handphones cameras, but after using ACE, there is a shift in using ZOOM meetings to record.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that the ACE is a handy app where students have learnt to use new digital applications to assist and guide them in preparing an attractive and interactive presentation. The contributing elements to ACE's success could be because it is a comprehensive guide and offers an easy-to-follow step-by-step guide from downloading attractive slides, preparing their presentations, and uploading them to the

teaching and learning platform commonly used by their lecturers as Microsoft Teams and Google classrooms. Besides helping students to gain confidence in preparing quality assignments, ACE website and apps is very much a beneficial learning tool in preparing students for the workforce while at the same time possessing good ICT skills. As mentioned by research such as Mseleku, Shanthi (Shanthi et al., 2021) and Puthong (Puthong, 2015), the academic world entails students to possess both academic literacy as well as creativity and critical thinking skills. This is also in line with the National Education policy IR 4.0 where humans and technology are integrated thus enabling creation of new knowledge and learning in education. As such, ACE is seen as this enabler towards achieving the goals.

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