

Digital Tools in Project-Based Group Assessments: Insights from Tertiary EFL Students' Experiences

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With the transition from a traditional to an authentic assessment approach, project-based group assessment has become increasingly popular in EFL tertiary courses as it evaluates both students' content knowledge and practical real-world skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. To achieve the target outcomes of the group assignment, students have to actively engage in teamwork throughout the project, from resource sharing, project planning, task delegation, PowerPoint preparation, and video editing up to the final presentation. Since Generation Z - students are digital natives, Internet-based tools are essential in facilitating this collaboration. This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, which employed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as research instruments, explored the digital platforms usage of 196 English-major students across three tertiary institutions with the focus on the impacts of these tools on their collaborative skills throughout the project process. The research findings showed that students preferred certain digital tools, including Zalo chat groups, Google Meet, Google Docs, and Canva, which helped to increase communication efficiency and promote collaborations across virtual environments. However, some difficulties were identified regarding monitoring students' individual contributions, misunderstanding due to lack of face-to-face interaction, fear of missing out (FOMO), and technology fatigue. Hence, this study offers some instructional recommendations for enhancing the digital tool application to address these challenges.

Keywords: digital tools, group assessment, collaborative skills

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