

Collaborative Reading and Writing on English Wikipedia as New Fashion for Gen Z: A Case Study in Taiwan

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Abstract

This study assesses integrating Wikipedia into the ESL/EFL curriculum to boost media literacy among Gen Z university students in Taiwan and address gender disparities. The "Wiki, We Keep!" project, initiated in Fall 2022, had students create biographies of women artists. Workshops and editathons with international editors improved understanding of Wikipedia's policies and cross-cultural communication. Results showed marked improvements in course preparation, teaching progress, and classroom interaction compared to the baseline before the new module implementation. Increased student willingness to contribute online content highlights Wikipedia's potential to enhance multiliteracies and inclusivity.

Keywords: collaborative reading and writing, multiliteracies, English Wikipedia, university-community education program

Introduction

The integration of Wikipedia into ESL/EFL curricula at the university level has predominantly been driven by academic institutions outside the United States (King, 2015; Konieczny & Eckert, 2021). However, challenges such as unfamiliarity with Wikipedia's policies, inappropriate topic selection, unreliable sources, and limited genre exposure have impeded its effectiveness, resulting in high article deletion rates and low learner motivation (King, 2015; Petrucco, 2018).

This study evaluates the effectiveness of integrating Wikipedia into the ESL/EFL curriculum to enhance media and information literacy among Gen Z students in Taiwan and address gender disparities on the platform. A report from the Digital Society Project identifies Taiwan as significantly impacted by foreign governments' dissemination of false information, underscoring the urgency to improve media literacy (Mechkova et al. 2022).

To tackle these challenges, a collaboration with Wikimedia Taiwan and the Foundation was initiated in Fall 2022 in the compulsory course *Multiliteracies: Problem-based English Reading and Writing I and II* at the Department of Applied Foreign Languages, National Taiwan University of Science

and Technology. Detailed course descriptions are available online ([Wikipedia: The NTUST AFL Wikipedia Education Program](#)). Groups of three to five students collaboratively craft biographies of women artists on English Wikipedia as term projects named "Wiki, We Keep!", specifically echoing the Art+Feminism initiative (<https://artandfeminism.org/>). The local chapter organizes introductory workshops and international editathons to enhance students' understanding of Wikipedia's community culture, policies, and cross-cultural communication skills.

Methods

This module employed a collaborative, multilingual, and multimodal methodology from curriculum planning to implementation (Macaro 2022). The class size in Table 1 ranged from 23 to 25 students each semester, with English proficiency levels between B2 and C1 according to the CEFR. Most students were Taiwanese aged 19-22, with several international/exchange students each semester, and had no prior experience editing/writing on Wikipedia.

	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023
N	25 (F=19)	23 (F=18)	24 (F=16)
Nationality	Taiwan (65), Malaysia (1), Japan (1), Indonesia (2), Vietnam (1), China (1), Macau (1)		

Table 1: Demographics of the students each semester

By introducing students to new writing styles—objective and collaborative reading/writing—they worked in groups to research and document the biographies of female artists on Wikipedia. The course began with gender disparity issues in content and editors, followed by an introductory workshop on Wikipedia's editorial rules and gender issues organized by the local chapter. After the topic and sample article search and outline presentations, students then participated in mini editathons to present their final drafts on Google Docs with an experienced international editor, engaging in online and offline interactions before online submission. Data collection included student course evaluation surveys to assess changes before and after the new module implementation, self-evaluations of innovative teaching, and individual reflections.

Results

Figures 1 and 2 demonstrated that implementing the new course schedule in Fall 2022 led to notable improvements in

course evaluations. Based on a 5-point scale, the course scores for preparation increased from Spring 2022 (4.28/4.55) to Fall 2023 (4.80/4.65). Teaching progress scores improved from Spring 2022 (4.28/4.47) to Fall 2023 (4.80/4.56). Classroom interaction rose from Spring 2022 (4.50/4.58) to Fall 2023 (4.80/4.62), peaking in Spring 2023 (4.93/4.72). Professional knowledge scores increased from Spring 2022 (4.39/4.67) to Fall 2023 (4.80/4.69). Student gains and overall average scores also showed notable improvements. Student self-evaluations reflected increased interest, independent thinking, and learning effectiveness from Spring 2022 to Spring 2023, with slight decreases in Fall 2023. After Spring 2023, each evaluation item consistently scored higher than the department average, underscoring the new teaching methods' effectiveness.

Students' reflections highlighted key learning outcomes, collaborative efforts, challenges faced, and their increased willingness to contribute content online. The reflections demonstrated the project's effectiveness in fostering a deeper understanding of Wikipedia's guidelines, improving writing and communication skills, and promoting a sense of community among participants. It sparked interest in digital composition among previously underperforming students, engaging diverse learners. One student noted, 'This course helped me understand the importance of reliable sources and collaborative editing.' Another remarked, 'Editing Wikipedia has improved my writing and research skills significantly.'

Discussion

The findings suggest that this newly established research-practice paradigm, by integrating Wikipedia into the EFL curriculum, can effectively enhance multiliteracies among university students (Azar 2023). The project improved practical skills associated with digital literacy and critical thinking and contributed to social change by reducing gender disparities on a global digital platform. The successful implementation underscores the potential for similar initiatives to leverage Wikipedia's educational value while promoting inclusivity and diversity in content creation. Through collective wisdom from university educators, community practitioners, instructors, students, and community members, all stakeholders have benefited from this collaborative module (Petrucco 2018). This reciprocal impact has allowed them to reframe their perspectives on collaborative teaching and learning in ESL/EFL education and achieve professional development (instructor's annual teaching reflection available at: <https://reurl.cc/KevAve>).

These results also demonstrate Wikipedia's potential as a powerful and practical tool for enhancing multiliteracy in an EFL context. The trends in course evaluation results indicated that innovative teaching methods positively impacted general course evaluations and student self-evaluations, particularly in stimulating interest, enhancing independent thinking, and improving overall learning effectiveness. Additionally, some students became teaching assistants and enriched their journey as global Wikipedians.

Students initially struggled with unfamiliarity with Wikipedia's policies and selecting appropriate topics. Workshops and guidance from experienced editors helped mitigate these issues. Challenges for module improvement included the need for more exposure to international editors and the ethical use of Gen AI. The rise in Spring 2023 evaluations could be attributed to the first attempt at a simultaneous online editathon rather than a pre-recorded commentary video in Fall 2023. Interacting directly with experienced editors boosted students' sense of challenge and accomplishment. Using Gen AI assisted in genre analyses of sample articles, but more guiding policies and instructions are required for fact-checking and editing materials.

Future research could explore the long-term impacts of such talent cultivation on instructor's and students' academic and professional trajectories, further solidifying the role of multiliteracies in contemporary education. Additionally, refining the use of Gen AI in educational settings and developing comprehensive guidelines for its ethical application would be valuable enhancements to this pedagogical innovation (Lauro & Johnke, 2017).

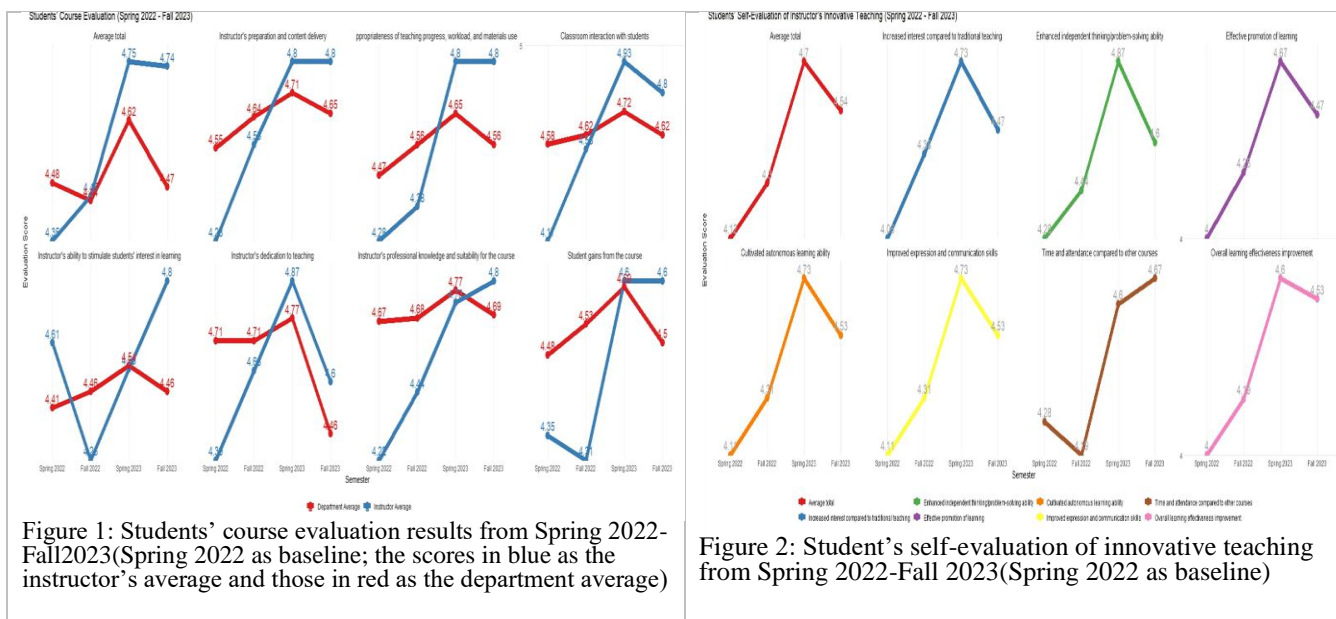
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Figures and Tables



Quotations extracted from students' reflections

Learning outcomes

- **Enhance editing skills:** "Throughout the editathon, I gained valuable insights and practical knowledge. For instance, I learned about the specific formatting requirements for artists and actors." (Feedback 1, No. 1)
- **Improved Writing and Communication:** "After the editathon, my writing skill becomes better, and I am more convenient writing in English and doing a translation." (Feedback 1, No. 5)
- **Understanding of Wikipedia's Guidelines:** "I think the most difficult one is staying neutral. Usually, when we are writing the sentence, we will unconsciously add 'very,' 'the most,' 'the biggest,' and other subjective adjectives." (Feedback 2, No. 10)

Collaborative Experience

- **Sense of Community:** Engaging with this topic and collaborating with classmates fostered a sense of community and shared expertise." (Feedback 2, No. 1)
- **Teamwork and Cooperation:** "This editathon gives me very good teamwork experience. We struggle together to come up with a suitable topic and keep revising the contents." (Feedback 1, No. 2). "Our collaboration was quite smooth. As for my editing part, it went relatively smoothly as well." (Feedback 2, No. 23)

Challenges faced

- **Initial Anxiety and Nervousness:** "I think the most difficult one is staying neutral. Usually, when we are writing the sentence, we will unconsciously add "very," "the most," "the biggest," and other subjective adjectives". "At first, I was quite nervous and anxious about it, and even considered it as a test." (Feedback 2, No. 19).
- **Overcoming Difficulties:** "Despite the initial challenge of finding suitable subjects, the satisfaction of successfully publishing our group's Wikipedia page was huge." (Feedback 2, No. 22). "Although we are able to reverse our article and re-submit the request, it seems taking a long time to do so till our article is accepted and becomes a page." (Feedback 1, No. 17)

Unique Experiences

- **First-time Editing:** "This is my first time editing Wikipedia, and I can only say that I really benefited a lot." (Feedback 1, No. 16). "Participating in this editathon was an interesting, fresh, and collaborative journey for me." (Feedback 2, No. 8)
- **Interaction with International Editors:** "Meeting an editor from another country made my wiki-writing adventure better. He delivered us some useful tips." (Feedback 2, No. 7). "I think it is great to have an interview with the international editor. Since she has years of experience, I felt a little bit afraid of being judged." (Feedback 1, No. 15)

Digital Writing

- **Increased Willingness to Write Online:** "Without this course, I do not think I would learn how to edit Wikipedia since I do not have a passion for writing something on the Internet. After this experience, I found out that I am not the antipathy of writing things on the internet." (Feedback 1, No. 5)

Table 2 Thematic analysis of students' reflections on their experiences