

## The use of Canvas and Voice Thread in an online English master's degree

*El uso de Canvas y Voice Thread en un máster de inglés online*

**Karen Mishell Aguaiza Ruiz, Shalena Silvana Naranjo Andrade**

### ABSTRACT

The implementation of technology is fundamental in the educational area and the basis for e-learning. Canvas and Voice Thread are two different online tools used in the learning process of an online master's degree in English. The two virtual tools have been used by students with a professional status for the development of both individual and collaborative learning activities. The two online tools are different, and each has a function within the learning process. Therefore, this study seeks to know the experience and perceptions of the students of the English master's degree about the use of technology, specifically the use of technological tools such as Canvas and Voice Thread in the learning process of the students. An interpretative design will be carried out through the use of a survey to know how students perceive the use of online tools and their comparative influence. The survey consists of three sections focused on personal information, perception of the online tools, comparison between their influence, and additional comments. The result of the study provides numerical data and descriptive knowledge of the influence of the online tools Canvas and Voice Thread in the development of the academic activities of adult learners in an online master's degree. Canvas is one the most influential tools in online learning due to its benefits and advantages.

**Keywords:** Electronic learning; Adult students; Learning processes.

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## RESUMEN

La implantación de la tecnología es fundamental en el ámbito educativo y la base del e-learning. Canvas y Voice Thread son dos herramientas online diferentes utilizadas en el proceso de aprendizaje de un máster online en inglés. Las dos herramientas virtuales han sido utilizadas por estudiantes con un estatus profesional para el desarrollo de actividades de aprendizaje tanto individuales como colaborativas. Las dos herramientas online son diferentes, y cada una tiene una función dentro del proceso de aprendizaje. Por lo tanto, este estudio busca conocer la experiencia y percepciones de los estudiantes del máster de inglés sobre el uso de la tecnología, específicamente el uso de herramientas tecnológicas como Canvas y Voice Thread en el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Se llevará a cabo un diseño interpretativo mediante el uso de una encuesta para conocer cómo perciben los alumnos el uso de las herramientas online y su influencia comparativa. La encuesta consta de tres secciones centradas en información personal, percepción de las herramientas online, comparación entre su influencia y comentarios adicionales. El resultado del estudio aporta datos numéricos y conocimiento descriptivo de la influencia de las herramientas online Canvas y Voice Thread en el desarrollo de las actividades académicas de los alumnos adultos de un máster online. Canvas es una de las herramientas más influyentes en el aprendizaje online debido a sus beneficios y ventajas.

**Palabras clave:** Aprendizaje electrónico; Estudiantes adultos; Procesos de aprendizaje.

## Introduction

Nowadays, the use of technology is part of our daily life. In the current era, the use of technology is essential due to its benefits in the field of education. One of the most remarkable benefits influences both teachers and students to improve the learning process and educational environment (Boonmoh et al., 2021). The use of technology has increased in the educational setting. Students are surrounded by digital resources and digital tools that help them to be connected and have enriching information for their learning such as virtual education. One of these advantages is that it allows people to study and prepare themselves through virtual education such as Teaching English as a foreign language master's degree. At the same time, it brings advantages as students can access this type of education no matter where they are. It is a positive opportunity to increase their knowledge and abilities regarding their learning. The use of online tools and programs is the key to assisting students in their learning process regardless of the modality of the education chosen by them. Thus, it is essential to study the different online tools such as Canvas and Voice Thread and their influence on an online English master's degree. Through the use of online tools, the relationship among teachers, materials, and students can be successful.

There are many online tools available to develop a virtual master's degree. However, Canvas and Voice Thread are used in the student's learning process for both individual and collaborative activities. Therefore, it is essential to understand the experience that students had with these online tools and how their use has influenced their learning. This study aims to comprehensively understand how these two online tools influenced the learning of adult students from the master's degree, as well as their characteristics, perceptions, and experience in terms of usage.

The new technological transformation has had a positive impact on the educational environments at advanced levels. Nowadays, we can see how distance education has increased, replacing the physical learning environment (Picciano, 2009). In particular, this alternate mode of instruction made higher education more democratic and scalable while still allowing students to be more flexible with their learning. Online learning will be considered within the framework of this investigation. Because learning management systems mediate online learning activities, students' acceptance of use and their "correct use" of the system are critical to the effectiveness of technology-mediated learning (Dang, 2020).

Knowles created the notion of adult learning (1975). The development of andragogy-based teaching methods for adult learners was aided by Knowles' identification of the distinctions between adult and child learners. Adult learners have several unique qualities, including self-direction, personal experience, readiness to learn, problem-centered learning, and internal learning incentives, according to Knowles (1975). This theory was chosen to provide further context for the study population, which consisted of Catholic University of Cuenca graduate students pursuing master's degrees. The process of developing and forming the research questions as well as the organization of the research survey benefited from an understanding of the study population. The researcher was motivated to investigate the relationship between students' learning and their perceptions toward the use of Canvas and Voice Thread by the theory of adult learning.

Teachers may make the most of Canvas's many useful features to enhance the efficiency of the teaching and learning process. It assists educators in accessing discussion boards, class schedules, lecture videos, grades, homework, message analytics, reports, groups, assignments for peer review, and other learning resources. Nonetheless, to fully utilize Canvas, educators must possess the necessary skills to navigate it, encourage student participation, and provide engaging lessons. Good results are produced when the canvas is used and understood (Santiana, 2021). Additionally, using Voice Thread, an online tool that lets users record narration for PowerPoint presentations while uploading the slides, was a prime example of how emerging technology can improve social presence and foster an interactive learning environment for students (Kumi et al., 2020). According to Wang et al. (2020), instructor-present video had a more positive impact on the learning process than instructor-absent video.

Many people consider the twenty-first century to be the age of technology. Technology is a vital part of our lives. It is recognized as the cornerstone of an economy's expansion. In the current context, a low-tech economy can never expand. It is a result of how much more time- and labor-efficient technology has made our work. Every potential subject is affected by technology, and education is one of those fields (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018).

## Use of technology in education

The way we work and live is being transformed by technology. The education sector is not an exception. In real terms, new technologies were being developed and invented practically every month in the late 1990s. Technology was all the rage, and enthusiastic researchers wanted to explore if their creation might change education as we knew it. Therefore, education was their principal focus (Firmin & Genesi, 2013). Significant adjustments are being made to the curriculum in higher education institutions. These fundamental changes are influenced by several factors, both inside and outside of the learning environments. These factors include, but are not limited to, digital transformation, online learning, and the application of online resources. When it comes to teaching in higher education, technology is used to demonstrate a variety of tools that include formalized learning settings. Students use these resources to further their learning.

Higher education institutions need to adapt their educational technology solutions to meet the needs of their students, while teachers need to reconsider what it means to deliver a learning experience. In many aspects, digital learning is considerably better for teachers and students than the traditional classroom model. Teaching and learning can take place whenever and wherever is most convenient for everyone. Of course, there are drawbacks to digital learning in addition to its advantages (Alenezi et al., 2023). Consequently, higher education are integrating technologies and online tools such as Canvas and Voice Thread to support learner-centered and personalized education systems. One of the best examples is this master's degree and the adoption of Canvas and Voice Thread in the development of the classes.

## Online learning

According to White (2003), the last decade has witnessed an enormous expansion in online learning opportunities, which has been the result of rapid developments in information and communications (together with societal changes). These kinds of classrooms are distinguished by a high degree of access to a wide range of technologies that can support teaching and learning, as well as by a high degree of proficiency in these technologies' educational applications by both teachers and students (Badia et al., 2014). Effective learning requires more than just student-to-student connection, which is why online involvement is crucial. The idea that students are engaged learners who seek out and produce knowledge within a relevant setting forms the basis of theories that support the integration of new technology into the classroom. Even if there are many different tools available, the design of a learning system suggests that it will be challenging to incorporate online learning into a complex system that is adaptable, time-scalable, and long-lasting (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021).

## Online tools

While educational technological tools are thought of as the technology that powers online education via the internet as the primary compelling instrument, online education may be obtained by the use of various tools. Technology is now widely used in online education as a tool for different aspects of teaching and learning. The benefits of online teaching and learning for instructors and students unquestionably go beyond a virtual classroom and include ease of use, time savings, accessibility, dynamic interactions between students and teachers, and the enormous amount of creativity produced during the process. Mbuva (2015), asserts that these online tools, which are seen as technology tools for online education, have improved online learning generally and elevated online teaching and learning to a higher level of significance and communication.

### Canvas

Regardless of the context in which they are utilized, the accessible LMS contains common learning aspects (pedagogy, learner environment, instructor tools, course and curriculum design, administrator tools, and technical specifications) for instruction (Mpungose & Khoza, 2020). According to Dang (2020), Canvas increases students' enthusiasm to learn and their level of engagement. It facilitates information sharing among students and teachers. Moreover, it was mentioned that several factors, including effort expectancy, social influence, and performance expectancy could affect how users behave. Therefore, it has been proposed that peer support and encouragement could improve the integration of Canvas into the learning process. Positive attitudes regarding adopting LMS in teaching and learning were demonstrated by teachers and students. What's more intriguing is that the research's findings supported the idea that using LMS to improve instruction strengthens the student-centered approach.

### Voice Thread

Currently, web 2.0 tools are widely used both inside and outside the classroom to develop foreign language skills. A convenient learning model incorporating these tools is blended learning, which combines in-person and online learning. The integration of these tools, including Voice Thread, is particularly noteworthy in online learning (Barahona, 2019). Voice Thread is a multimedia tool that allows users to create albums by inserting different documents such as PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, videos, audio, and images. Visitors can leave comments in various ways, including voice recordings through a microphone, video recordings with a webcam, and written text using the keyboard. In addition, users can make a phone call or upload a file from their computer. Regarding its use, Voice Thread is a useful tool for improving the oral skills of foreign language learners. The teacher creates and hosts the material on the application, allowing students to leave comments that can be listened to and responded to later. In addition, students can listen to their classmates' recordings and respond to them. These offer great advantages that should be utilized outside the classroom to encourage students to engage autonomously in the development of the activities.

## Methodology

According to the essence of this research, the phenomenological study is the most appropriate to know how people lived an experience based on the same phenomenon as is the case of the learners who will participate in this study. To know their experience using the different tools such as Canvas and Voice Thread. Furthermore, because it sprang from a philosophical tradition that has been working to make sense of the lived experience since the early 20th century, it will help us comprehend human experience. Furthermore, the research methodology is a qualitative approach.

In addition to ensuring the validity and reliability of the research findings, a mixed-method design can offer a more thorough and nuanced understanding of a research issue. Thus, in the context of a study on the use of Canvas and Voice Thread in an online English Master's degree program, a mixed-method design will help to identify trends and correlations and can provide deeper insight into students' experiences with the program. Due to our design, I will use the interpretative research method. The interpretative method delves into the experiences of people who live the events that are part of the problem, so it tries to create new and detailed meanings (Duque & Aristizábal, 2019). This method will help to illuminate the experiences lived using online tools. Interpretative research, often associated with mixed methods, focuses on understanding and interpreting the meaning of social phenomena from the perspective of the participants.

## Participants

The study was conducted virtually with the students of English language teaching master's program online from the Catholic University of Cuenca. The master's students are professional people. They are finishing their first semester and have been using Canvas and Voice Thread during the development of their classes. The age of the students varies in the master's degree, however, they are at the same level since they were all trained in the use of online tools such as Canvas and Voice Thread. There is no exclusion of students as they all belong to the same group. Moreover, the tasks performed have been the same for all. In addition, it was considered to select this group of students since they are the ones who use these online tools due to the modality of mastery. According to the objectives and purpose of the study, the sample is the most appropriate.

## Instruments

To collect data, a survey will be conducted. Surveys are an adaptable approach that has many uses and benefits for both participants and researchers. The use of the survey is useful since it covers demographic information, tool usage, usability, accessibility, perceived contributions to the learning process, and platform preferences. The survey is structured to cover several content areas that fit the research objectives. Different sections address specific aspects of demographic

information, perceptions of the learner, the comparative influence of Canvas and Voice Thread on the learning process and an additional commentary on the tools. There are 11 questions on demographic information (3 items), experience and perceptions in the use of the tools canvas and voice Thread (4 items), the comparative influence of Canvas and Voice Thread (3 items), and additional comments (1 item).

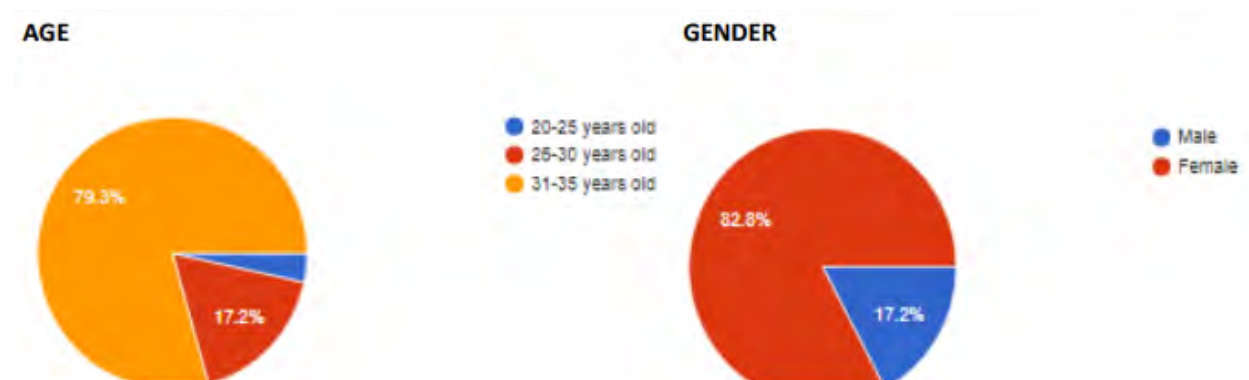
## Results

A survey was conducted among the students of the English language teaching master's program offered online to determine their experience and perceptions of the use of Canvas and Voice Thread in their learning process. First, permission was sought from the program director to carry out the survey. After receiving the consent, a meeting was held to inform the students of the survey and its instructions. The survey was conducted online using Google Forms. In addition, the survey consisted of four sections; specific aspects of demographic information, the perception of Canvas and Voice Thread usage, the comparative influence of Canvas and Voice Thread on the learning process, and additional commentaries on the tools. The survey was conducted with 29 students in the master's program. The results are presented in the following tables and graphs.

### Section 1

This section shows demographic information about the students concerning their age, gender, and time of learning in the master's degree to know more about their profile. This section has the purpose of knowing the students of the master's degree who used the online tools.

Figure 1. Adult learners' age and gender.



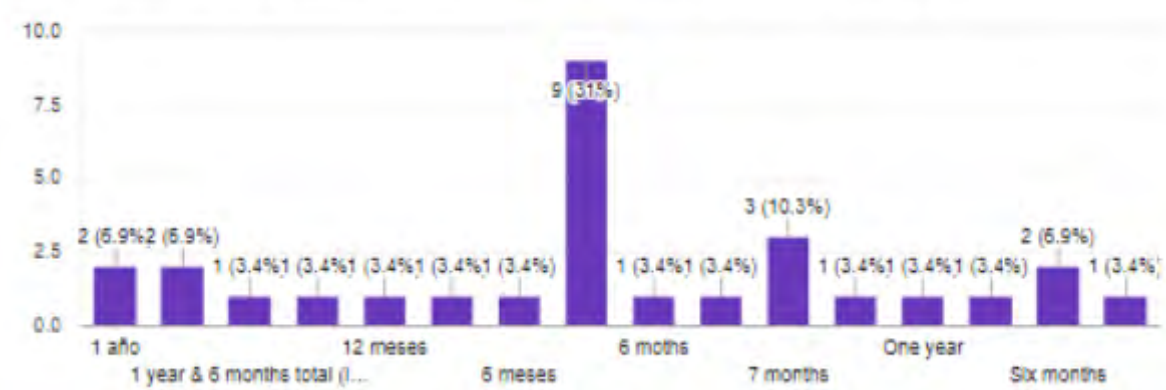
Source: Own elaboration.



Based on the figure above, most of the students were between 31-35 years old which corresponds to 79.3% while 17.2 % of the students were between 26-30 years old and only 3.4 % were between 20-25 years old. On the other hand, 82.8 % of the students (24) were female while 17.2 % were male.

Figure 2. Participation time in an online master's program.

### 1.3 How long have you been participating in an online master's program?



Source: Own elaboration.

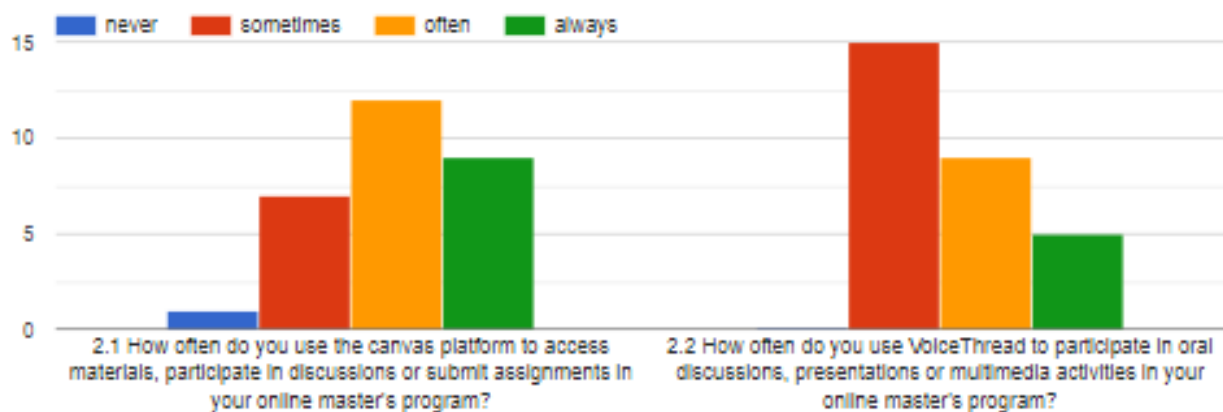
The next figure shows the results of the time that students have studied for an online master's degree. Based on the graph, half of the students correspond to 51.6% having studied an online program for 6-7 months, while the other students have over a year and more.

## Section 2

The questions in Section 2 captured the frequency and satisfaction levels of using Canvas and Voice Thread, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of student perceptions. Sections 2.2 and 2.4 asked participants to rate the usability and accessibility of Canvas and Voice Thread, respectively. This information was crucial for gaining insights into the practical aspects of using these tools; it contributed directly to the understanding of the learner experience.



Figure 3. Adult learners' self-rated perception of Canvas and Voice Thread Usage.



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 3 shows that students used the canvas platform often instead of the Voice Thread in the development of the different activities done in the master's program because half of the numbers of students used sometimes the Voice Thread in their learning activities.

Figure 4. Adult learners' self-rated experience of Canvas and Voice Thread Usage.



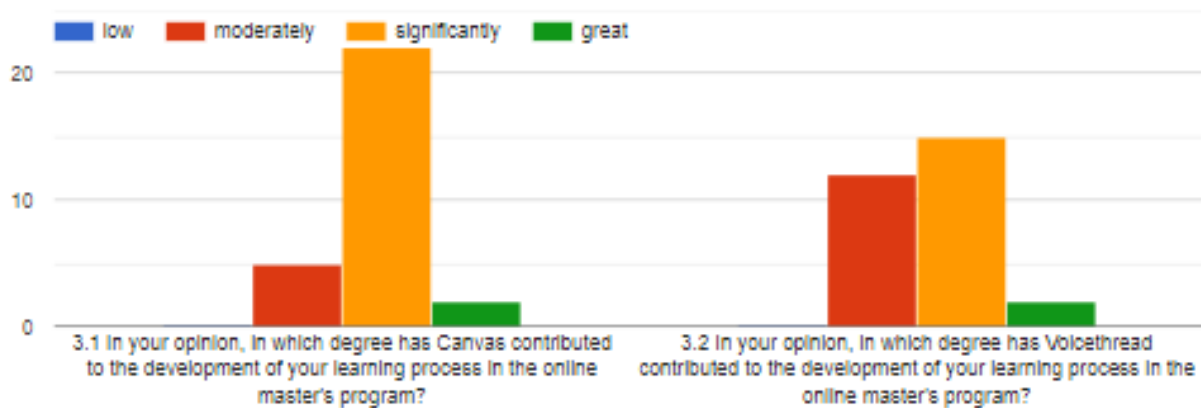
Source: Own elaboration.

According to the usability and accessibility of each platform, Voice Thread offered an unsatisfactory experience in comparison with the Canvas platform since almost half of the students ranked as intermediate in their overall experience with that tool.

### Section 3

The following section was directly addressed by asking participants to assess the contributions of each platform to their learning process, and it concluded with a choice-based question to determine the perceived influence of one over the other.

Figure 5. Comparison of the influence of Canvas and Voice Thread on the development of the learning process.



Source: Own elaboration.

In Figure 5, there is a great difference between Canvas and Voice Thread about the development of their learning process due to the bigger number of students (22 students from 29) who had a significant experience.

Comparison of Canvas and Voice thread on the development of the learning process.

The following table explains the reasons why adult learners considered each platform as influential in their learning process during the master's program. Based on the results Voice Thread was not as satisfactory as the canvas platform since it does not have as many functions to complete different activities, moreover, it is a platform that is focused on the interaction of people through videos and the development of oral production. Furthermore, it did not allow adult learners to have enough information and sufficient content to support their learning. Nevertheless, it was an excellent online tool for more interactive learning with the whole classmates.

Table 1. Comparison of the influence of Canvas and Voice Thread on the development of the learning process.

Scale	Canvas	Voice Thread
Most Influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It had different functions to do multiple activities such as uploading assignments, downloading material, and taking evaluations.</li> <li>-It was a complete and comfortable tool with clear and accurate instructions.</li> <li>- It allowed us to have a lot of information on the modules and content in an organized way.</li> <li>- It allowed us to have many articles to support the learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It enhanced collaborative learning since it allowed me to know and share personal opinions in forums.</li> <li>- Used just for videos to create interactive learning.</li> <li>- Voice Thread is less stressful due to the creation of videos.</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration.

Section 4

Finally, it provided an opportunity for participants to share additional comments. It allowed adult learners to explain their insights into specific experiences, challenges, or aspects that may not have been captured. Thus, the results are shown in the table below.

Table 2. Additional comments based on the application of Canvas and Voice Thread usage.

	Both	Canvas	Voice Thread
Personal opinions	They were innovative tools and helpful to learn, however, it was essential to know how to manage them and their accessibility to use them more comfortably.	It was interesting and useful since it had many options to support and enhance learning. It allowed me to complete tasks, and have feedback and a lot of information.	Voice Thread was an interactive tool to empower oral production. Nevertheless, it was difficult to manage due to the lack of features and the steps to submit the activities.

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on Table 2, Canvas and Voice Thread have been innovative and helpful tools in the learning process of adult learners. Moreover, the way of using each one of the online tools has been the key to developing the input through the master's program. Nevertheless, the Voice Thread tool has been the only one that was described as difficult due to the lack of features and the different steps when submitting a video which is contrary to using Canvas.

Discussion

This study aims to explore students' perspectives on using Voice Threads and Canvas. The data indicates that the majority of adult learners are in the age range of 31 to 35. Furthermore, in this survey, 82.8 % are female. Though some of them have greater experience with this kind of virtual learning, just 51.6% of them have been enrolled in an online program for six to seven months. Given that two online tools—Canvas and Voice Thread—have been employed, students enrolled in this online master's program must utilize technology to the fullest extent possible to enhance their learning experience. According to Dang (2020), the flexibility afforded by the use of online resources in higher education, such as this online master's degree, has made online education a vital component of modern society.

## Perceptions of canvas and Voice Thread usage

The use of canvas and Voice Threads in software development differs significantly. Figure 3 demonstrates how Canvas is frequently used to access resources, participate in discussions, and complete assignments during the online master's program. Meanwhile, the Voice Thread is occasionally used to participate in spoken activities and create multimedia activities as part of the learning process. This means that Canvas is more advantageous to adult learners because it provides several options. Furthermore, students prefer Canvas to the Voice Thread because it is more usable and accessible (Figure 4).

On the other hand, not all adult students used Voice Threads to participate in conversations, presentations, or multimedia activities during the learning process since their usability and accessibility were inefficient. As previously said, pupils will not benefit from this online technology unless the teacher provides proper instruction (Santiana, 2021). Because of the nature of the learning, learners must occasionally double-check whether or not they have uploaded the job, which is uncomfortable. On the contrary, when utilizing Canvas, people can work with it without difficulty because its applications allow them to find diverse and deeper information to finish the activities.

## Comparison between canvas and Voice Thread

Based on Figure 5, Canvas is an influential tool in the adult learning process because of its benefits, which include the ability to create alternative activities, upload and re-upload assignments, download material, and have more information about each of the program's contents. By the way, it improves the student-centered approach. It provides several functions and accessibilities for gathering enough information. Similarly, Dang (2020) stated that students were favorable to using Canvas since it encouraged collaborative learning to exchange knowledge and increased students' interest and motivation to learn. According to the results in Table 1, students feel comfortable using this tool since it provides clear and precise directions and allows them to access enough information in an orderly manner. Furthermore, it promotes student learning by allowing them to access a variety of articles and materials hosted on the Canvas platform.

In contrast to Canvas, Voice Thread aids in the creation of films to boost interactive learning by allowing students to offer personal thoughts on any topic, hence increasing collaborative learning as mentioned in Table 1. According to the poll, students appreciate this program because it reduces stress due to the creation of videos. However, it can be difficult to manage due to a lack of functionality and the processes required to submit a video. Voice Thread is a wonderful online tool since it is dynamic and interactive, allowing students to record audio and video to offer feedback on any material. Voice Thread suggests considerable benefits for motivating students to independently create and execute activities, hence boosting self-directed learning. Nonetheless, Voice Threads are less useful because they do not provide students with greater information and a large number of documents and articles to study and learn about a topic, as Canvas provides.

## Further reflections

Students said that the Voice Thread and the canvas are creative learning tools (Table 2). All of them, though, have benefits and drawbacks. The majority of students also provide comments regarding their use of the Voice Thread. Adult learners claim that while Canvas has many useful features, there are several that make participation submissions difficult to remember. There are occasionally technical issues when using it. However, because it improves oral production, improving interactive learning is essential. It is a useful strategy for assisting pupils who require oral expression improvement. On the other hand, students have great things to say about the master's program's use of Canvas.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in the current educational environment, technology integration into online learning has become essential. With their respective advantages and disadvantages, Voice Thread and Canvas are two of the many tools that are readily available. With its user-friendly interface and extensive feature set, Canvas stands out as a leader in online learning, providing a thorough educational experience that encourages participation, cooperation, and knowledge exchange. For educators and adult learners alike, its user-friendly design and accessibility make it a top option that promotes seamless instruction and the development of a variety of learning activities.

However, Voice Thread has some usability and accessibility issues that could prevent it from being widely adopted. On the other hand, Voice Thread enhances interactive learning experiences through the creation of videos and group conversations. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, Voice Thread is still beneficial for encouraging learners to actively participate and improve their spoken ability.

Voice Thread enhances Canvas's strong and student-centered approach to online learning by providing special chances for interactive participation. When used in tandem, these resources improve the virtual learning environment while meeting the various requirements and learning preferences of adult learners.

In order to maximize the advantages of virtual education, instructors need to keep utilizing technology. Instructors may design dynamic and engaging virtual classrooms that enable adult learners to excel in their academic and professional endeavors by skillfully utilizing platforms such as Voice Thread and Canvas. The opportunities for improving online education will expand along with technology, guaranteeing that students have access to the tools and assistance they require to succeed in a world that is becoming more and more digital.

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