

TEACHING WRITING USING A DIGITAL CAMERA

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the skills that students should master. Since writing is quite difficult for students to learn; therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out whether a digital camera had positive effects on students' writing skill. There were thirty-three students involved in this study. The data were collected by interviewing the students and observing their writing works. It was found that teaching writing using a digital camera had positive effects on students' writing skill. The students also gave good feedback to the teacher. The results of the students' work were very excellent and they read their posters energetically. Moreover, the students were active, worked cooperatively, and had high spirit in writing posters using a digital camera.

Key words: *writing, digital camera*

The most challenging part of language learning is writing. Although listening and speaking can be learned for a certain amount of time in the pre-school period, it is required to have formal education to acquire reading and writing skills. Writing is a complex metacognitive activity drawing on an individual's knowledge basic skills, strategies, and ability to coordinate multiple processes. Writing skill can be gained in a long-term process during which an individual should merge his/her knowledge about grammar with numerous grammatical rules and build up coherence and unified structures. According to Byrne (1993: 4-5), there are three problems in writing: psychological, linguistic, and cognitive aspects. From

the psychological aspect, the act of writing becomes difficult because writing is a solitary activity and the fact that people are benefit of feed back. From the linguistic aspect, writers should be sure with the choice of sentence structure and the way sentences are linked together and sequenced so that writing can be interpreted on its own. From the cognitive aspect, writers have to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures which are less used in speech. They also have to learn how to organize ideas in such a way that can be understood by the readers who are not known by the writers. However, Sharples (1999) states that writing is an analytical, requires evaluation and problem solving, and is a process relying

Tanggal masuk naskah : 23 Juli 2012
Tanggal disetujui : 13 Agustus 2012

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on synthesis. Although most of the students were reluctant towards writing, teachers should maximize the writing skills for their students. Therefore, they can acquire critical thinking skills and express their knowledge and ideas effectively. In addition, they should be exposed to writing activities not only at school but also outside school.

Furthermore, EFL/ESL teachers are known for their innovations. When a new method approach comes along, they explore, discuss, and sometimes adopt it partially or completely. In other words, the main challenge for teachers lies in identifying the L2 potential of the tools in order to create a meaningful context for their appropriation within the language learning classroom. For a language learner examining such a generic tool, the difficulty in creating the necessary order, and structure required for classroom exploitation are the major challenges associated with this approach. Therefore, teachers should use technology in order to improve their students' writing skill. By using technology, it is expected that students will enjoy the writing subject and improve their writing skill.

Consequently, teachers should know how to operate and integrate it in teaching writing in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers should integrate

technology in writing classrooms so that teachers can improve their students' writing abilities, especially the senior high school students.

One form of the technology that can be used to improve students' writing skill is a digital camera. According to Education World (2005:1) cited in Supon (2007), "teachers across the country and around the world are discovering many valuable uses of digital cameras; uses that both engage students and make their own professional lives easier." Finally, using a digital camera in writing lessons lets students see their errors in producing the text visually, have instant feedback, see their errors for themselves, and lets the teacher put extra efforts and responsibility upon the student (Ugan, 2007). As a result, the teacher will have the time to give such elements as coherence, acceptability, inform-ativity, and inter-textuality intentionally and situationally to his/her students all of which are required for a good text and take more time to teach in teaching process-based writing skills.

Since students found difficulties in writing something; therefore, the writer was interested in applying the project of the teaching writing using a digital camera in the content area in order to see the positive effects of digital a camera on students' writing skill.

Description of Writing

Byrne (1993:1) states that writing is the combination of letters which are arranged to form sentence or paragraphs. "Writing is primarily a mental activity, but it relies on physical tools, and resources from pens and paper to word processor (Sharples, 1999: 6)". As cited in Sitinjak (2007:1), writing is the act of forming the graphic symbols, a thinking process where symbols have to be arranged according to certain conventions to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences.

Sharpless (1999:10) explains that: (1) writing is a demanding activity. Writing involves engagement and reflection. Most writing involves deliberate planning, (2) writing is analytic, requires evaluation and problem solving, (3) a writer needs to work with in the constraints of grammar, style and topic, and (4) writing is a solitary task, but a writer is immersed in a world of social and cultural influences. Writing is both solitary and collaborative in that a writer often works alone, but with a language that has evolved in society, drawing on the ideas and texts of others. Writing as design interpretive—the writer creates new meaning out of the particular set of resources and skills that form the context of writing.

Description of Digital Cameras

Digital cameras are educational tools that support purposeful instruction with a clear vision on curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reflection. Digital cameras also have value and have a positive impact on learning. Furthermore, digital cameras provide the illustrations and graphics to promote concept attainment and to stimulate the memory strategies. Regardless of the content area, digital imaging is a powerful teaching tool that supports the curriculum across all content areas. It has been noted that digital imaging motivates students to write (Rivard, 2004) cited in Supon (2007). Knowing that digital photographs encourage students to write, students of all ages should be given the opportunities. When the opportunities to write are available, students learn to develop his or her writing style. When students are encouraged to develop their own style, they are able to apply the process to other writing tasks. This motivates them to write for themselves-promoting enjoyment of writing throughout their lives.

Digital camera usage increases analytical skills and can be used as a means of assessing student

performance. Teachers can assess students' performance in order to see their high quality performance and it can effectively be documented through photographs. When students recognize similarities and differences of their performance through photos, students become more reflective and effective with self-assessment. This process increases better performance.

Teaching Writing Using a Digital Camera

Writing requires grammatical and cognitive skills and more time to master. Currently, teachers in most schools concentrate on the education of product-based writing and allocate most of their time for activities related with the exterior structure of the texts.

In line with that, digital images provide ways for students, readers, and writers to engage with both visual and printed texts. In a traditional think aloud, students read printed text orally. They pause to insert their questions, connections, applied reading strategies, and observations associated with the text they have read. Most of the students with whom we have worked have created their own digital pictures, either by scanning or photographing original artwork by using digital cameras to take photographs.

Related Study

The previous study related to the project is entitled *The Effect of Using Digital Cameras and Over-head Projector on the Writing Skills of Students* written by Suat Ungan (2007). The objectives of this study were to find out the significant difference between a writing lesson through digital cameras and over-head projector and to find out the significant difference between a writing lesson through digital cameras and over-head projector and that through traditional methods during the perception of the matter with regard to learning and evaluation and gender. The result of the study showed that there was a significant difference between a writing lesson through digital cameras and over-head projector than that through traditional methods during the perception of the matter with regard to learning and evaluation and gender.

The other study related to the project is entitled *What Role do Digital Media Play in Autonomous Learning? Reflections on Moral Philosophy and Education, with Special Reference to the Educational Value of Digital Media* written by Friedrich. The objectives of the study was to find out the effect of digital media on the learners and the learning process. The results of the study showed that digital media could effect the

learners and the learning process effectively.

Methodology

The experiment was done in order to apply the project and was helped by the English teacher of the school. The writer observed students attitudes toward the program by taking some photographs and guided the students to take some photographs around the environment of the school.

1) Preparation before the teaching

Before conducting the project, the lesson plan was made as a guidance in teaching writing in the classroom. The lesson plan stated what should be done for the pre-activities, whilst activities, and post activities. The material for the classroom was poster which is based on the curriculum of the senior high school. The tools used in the classromm were laptop, digital camera, LCD, and papers to write posters.

2) Teaching and Learning Process

The teaching practice was conducted once at the school on Monday, 18th May 2009. Actually, every Monday the students celebrate flag ceremony because there was a problem, the flag ceremony was cancelled. Therefore, the writer taught the students for two session meetings. First, the teacher of English of the school guided

the students to pray. After that, the writer came to the class. The writer taught the material based on the curriculum; therefore, the writer taught them how to write poster. Since they will have semester examination next June, so the writer should follow the lesson plan that they had not learned yet.

In conducting the project, students were divided into groups. Each groups consisted of five or six students. Each groups was resposible to take their own photographs by using a digital camera. Since the writer brought only one digital camera; therefore, each member of the groups should wait for their turn to take photographs around their environ-ment. Students who took the photographs were guided by the English teacher of the school and the rest of the students who stayed in the classroom were taught how to make posters by the writer. After they had already taken the photograp, the photograp were showed by using LCD. Having seen the photographs, they tried to write their posters by using colourful pens. They discussed with their friends in writing their posters. They shared their work with the members of the group. However, some of the students still had difficulties in choosing right words to write posters. Nevertheless, they had tried hard to write the posters, they checked the words by

looking up their dictionaries. The writer gave students chance to write their posters by using their imagination and their words. Eventhough, the writer saw there are some mistakes in their writing, the writer gave the chance for the students to write their posters by themselves. After they had finished it, the groups of the students would do the collaborative writing, so they could know their mistakes and enforce them to have critical thinking. Having done the collaborative thinking, students rewrote their posters again at home due to the the limitation of the time. Before doing it, . Therefore, they had ideas what they wanted to write, since it was quite difficult to start to write.

Population

The population comprised all the eleventh grade students in the academic year 2008/2009 of SMA Islam Az-Zahra Palembang.

Sample

The students of the the project was XI science in the academic year 2008/2009 of SMA Islam Az-Zahra Palembang. The total number of the students were thirty-three students. It consisted of fourteen male students and nineteen female students.

each group should read their posters in their place, while the others were listening to their friends. In addition, students would put their posters on the board for a moment after they had rewritten and had attached the photographs.

Moreover, the writer did the integrated skills in the classroom. Based on the interview on the students directly in the classroom, students enjoyed learning writing using a digital camera. Because they could learn how to operate the digital camera and chose their objects based on their wish

Reflection

When the writer came to the class, there were thirty three students in the class. They were enthusiastic when the writer said that they were learning how to write posters by using a digital camera. Since it was the first time for them to learn English by using technology especially, digital camera, most of them wanted to take photographs around their environment. The writer was delighted because they had high spirit to learn it and they were cooperative and enthusiastic about doing the project.

Moreover, the facilities of the school were quite complete to support the teaching and learning practice

process. The writer used some media as her teaching and learning support such as a laptop, a digital camera, and an LCD.

However, in conducting the project, the writer faced some obstacles, for example, the limitation of time. The writer was allowed to do the project in that school for only two meetings. Because the students will have the semester examination next June and the writer also should study at her college on that day they learned English. Therefore, the writer done the project on Monday for two meetings. The writer only provided one digital camera; therefore, students should wait for their turn to take pictures. However, the students were active, they did not wait for the camera for so long. They took the photographs using their mobile phones, after that they gave the photographs to their group. After the other groups had already taken the photographs, the groups which had taken the photographs using their mobile phones retook photographs again. Besides, the students could not attach the photographs directly to the paper because the photographs were not printed yet. Therefore, the writer allowed them to rewrite their posters in their homes and attach the photographs on their posters.

All of the process of teaching practice were documented by using a digital camera in order to evaluate and improve the writer 's teaching ability in teaching English later.

Data Collection

The students' work, observation, and the results of the informal interviews on students in each group were served as data sources. The result of the data were analysed to see whether using a digital camera in teaching writing had positive effects on students' writing skills. Besides, the writer also compared the traditional method used by teachers in teaching English.

Furthermore, the data were collected after the teaching and learning process. There were thirty- three participants participating in this project and all students answered the interview. They said that they really loved to learn English; writing English using a digital camera.

Finding and Interpretation

The writer found that teaching writing using digital camera had positive effects on students' writing skill. Students also gave good feedback to the writer. The results of the students' work were very excellent and they wrote their posters energetically. In the teaching and

learning process, the writer did the observation, students were active to write posters based on the photographs taken, worked cooperatively with their friends, and had high spirit in writing the posters using a digital camera.

The interpretation, teaching writing by using a digital camera could encourage students to write and had positive effects on the students. It was also effective and motivated students to write compared to the traditional approach. Since it was a new approach for them that is using a digital camera, they took their own photographs and wrote what they wanted.

Conclusion

Digital technology and Information Communication and Technology (ICT) texts will not replace traditional literacy. They are increasingly becoming a part of students' everyday experiences; therefore, they need to be integrated into the framework in order to maximise students' potential for literacy and learning. Students are surrounded by texts which combine images, words and sound, on screen and on paper, at home, on the street, and at school. They bring a wide experience of texts to their school work, expecting to read images as well as printed materials and, increasingly, expecting to use computers in seeking

information and composing their own texts. Many of these texts combine words with moving images, sounds, colours, a range of photography, drawn or digitally created visuals; some are interactive, encouraging readers to compose, represent, and communicate through the several dimensions offered by technology.

Furthermore, helping students to encourage students to write is an important and challenging task. If we want to be successful in this effort, we need to provide students with feedback they should find useful and motivated. In addition, the use of digital cameras is very helpful to encourage students to write. Students would have ideas to write something, organize, and elaborate their ideas by using digital cameras. Hopefully, teachers would use this way in order to improve their strategies in teaching and learning process and students would have challenge in doing the activities related to technology; for example, digital cameras.

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