THE USE OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN TEACHING EFL WRITING IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

This study explores the implementation of digital storytelling to teaching writing for EFL students. The participants of this study were gained from 20 out of 120 students of the third semester who take Intermediate Genre Based Writing class purposively. Meanwhile, in implementing the use of digital storytelling is using qualitative method and in collecting the data, the researchers conducted trilingual methods including observation, documentations and interview to the students and the teacher. The study resulted 20 draft stories and 20 digital storytelling. These results are supported by data from interviews with teachers and the documentation of the video recording during the online teaching and learning process. Through observation, it is also found that the teacher guides and motivates her students to take part actively and enthusiastically when the process of teaching and learning takes place. Moreover, the students also increase their knowledge of using media amazingly. It is proved by some products of media created by students when they did presentation such as they can create a digital storytelling which is combining text, picture and sound by using a simple application named Canva.

Keywords: COVID-19, digital storytelling, media, millennial, writing skill.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the teaching field. Pandemic changed the pattern of our higher education [1]. As a result from the outbreak, learning media and systems are starting to shift from conventional learning to the latest learning process by utilising technological assistance [2], in which all conventional face-to-face classes turn into online classes [1]. Online learning is a technology-based educational method, or more specifically, online education is a form of distance education that uses computers and the internet in networks as a medium for delivering educational material [3]. Through the use of digital network, both teacher and students can carry out the learning process regardless of time and place virtually. The internet, networks, and digital media all play important roles as learning media in online learning since the learning media itself focuses on how shared spaces can be used to communicate ideas and produce specific learning content so as to improve the skills of students and teacher [4].

As for attending scheduled important research activities, professors in Japan were permitted to continue their work in the college laboratories. On the other hand, researchers in Northern New York State were not allowed on campus during the lockdown [5].

When it comes to learning, English learning consists of four main skill aspects, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is considered as a complex skill that people must master, especially in academic writing. Not only the students that will experience difficulties, but teaching English writing skill is also considered as a challenging task for EFL teachers [6]. Some studies has been done in the area of teaching writing to EFL students, to resolve the difficulties of teaching writing. For instance, a study conducted in Palestine that focuses on criticizing teachers' traditional methods in teaching writing [7]. Within their

study, they found out that using traditional teaching methods results in a passive and monotonous classroom activities. Therefore, it is necessary for the appropriate teaching media to be more varied, creative, and innovative in order to increase student motivation to learn, make a student master better learning goals, agree on the appropriate learning method, and increase student activity in learning [8]. Writing can also be taught through the use of online media. Nowadays, most students all over the world use social media as a part of their daily life [9]. Knowing this, teaching EFL writing through the use of online media is considered to be effective. Digital learning through videos is very effective because of the aspects of flexibility which can help the depth and retention of knowledge, in addition to motivate an interest in learning as it can be used to illustrate the relevance of concepts [10].

Another way to improve students' writing skill is through digital storytelling. Digital storytelling provides students the opportunity to gain new skills such as synthesis, analysis, and evaluation while given the chance to interact and showcase their work for the class to see [11]. To engage EFL learners cognitively and effectively with a story, it is argued that careful selection of story content should be made by focusing not only on linguistic resources but also on elements that might catch the interest of the students such as interesting characters, a clear plot and ending [12]. Digital storytelling could become a viable approach regarding media learning. As story itself is a rich resource for literacy that provides abundant linguistic resources for students to learn. Its concept revolves around the idea of combining the art of telling stories with the help of the expanding multimedia technology, such as images, audio, and video. Therefore, by introducing technology into EFL learning, digital storytelling can combine the advantages and success of traditional storytelling with the innovations of new technologies to teach English to non-native students [13]. Engaging interactively with stories allows EFL teachers and students not only to extend their language proficiency, but also to develop emotional involvement with the target language [14]. In order for students to achieve this, digital storytelling undergoes different phases, one of

them is writing the script. Students will have to write a story of their own version, which then will be used as 'the script' as in a film. The purpose of this writing process is to enhance students' capability to write creatively.

2. Theoretical Review

A. Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is a form of digital production that combines the art of telling stories and digital media in which includes text, pictures, recorded audio narration, music, and video. These elements are then blended together with the use of computer software in order to tell a story that usually revolves around a specific theme or topic and often contains particular point of view [15]. Digital storytelling are mostly expected to be short, within the length of between 2 to 10 minutes of presentation.

Digital storytelling have been widely acknowledged by many as an effective method in learning. As stated by [15], digital storytelling have the potential to be a powerful education method for students at all ages and levels, as it capitalizes on the creative talents of students. In addition, digital storytelling could improve a students' skill to analyse, synthesise, and evaluate their own creation of stories. This further proves that digital storytelling benefits students in many different literary perspectives when they create or write their own stories, which are compiled in the table below:

Digital literacy
   The ability to communicate to discuss issues, gather information, and seek help.
Global literacy
   The capacity to read, interpret, respond, and contextualize messages from a global perspective.
Technology literacy
   The ability to use computers to improve learning,
      productivity, and performance.
Visual literacy
   The ability to understand, produce, and communicate through visual image.

Information literacy
   The ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Fig. 1. The benefits of digital storytelling in 21st Century Skills and Literacies [15].

From the table, it can be concluded that digital storytelling opens up many opportunities for students to improve their soft skill ability and further develops better understanding on various literacy fields.

B. Digital Media

Digital media is defined as media that presents a variety of content by combining data, text, sound, and numerous types of images that are stored in digital formats and delivered through optical cable-based networks, broadband, satellite, and micro systems [16]. This media is also addressed to as new media due to the constellation of media technology changes that cannot be summed up in a single technical characteristic. Furthermore, this media refers to computer applications that include multimedia, artificial intelligence, networks, and several electronic systems, according to [17], it all cover transmission systems (via cable or cable), miniaturization systems, information storage and retrieval systems, image presentation systems (using a flexible combination of text and graphics), and control systems (by computers).

The use of digital media in learning is considered to support teaching and learning process by allowing students to understand the material provided through various teaching methods in which teachers do not always use the lecture method to teach but also use other methods such as discussion and analysis. Moreover, the use of digital in education is considered necessary due to multiple aspects, such as the availability of broad access to information, in which students can access information whether it is related to lessons or other matters outside of academia as long as there is an internet network and digital media is also a practical educational tool where the learning process can be done anywhere.

Essentially, new digital media represents a media ecology in which more traditional media converge with digital media, particularly interactive media and social communication media [18]. In more detail, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are listed as new digital media that fall under the category of online media, in which this type of media allows ordinary people to participate, share, talk, and create online networks. Other new digital media include smartphones, notebook computers, portable media players, video games, and virtual reality.

C. Recount Writing

A recount text is a piece of text that recalls past events in chronological order [19]. Recount writing, in other words, is a type of writing that tells a story about an event or experience that is usually based on the author's own experiences; thus, stories are usually told in the first person. According to [20], there are several specifications for language features in recount writing, including specific participants, the use of material processes, time and place circumstances, the use of past tenses, and temporal sentences. In more detail, the writing uses the past tense and descriptive language, with adverbs and adjectives frequently applied to bring the story to life. Moreover, events are usually explained in chronological order by paying attention to time conjunctions, quotations, and introductory paragraphs

that simply explain who, what, where, and when. According to [21], a recount text has a generic structure that covers the orientation, which includes the introduction of background information in the context of the text; the events, which contains a chronology of events; and the reorientation, which involves the author's personal statement as a closing paragraph.

Recount writing is classified into several types based on the purpose of the writing. The first one is a personal recount or writing about a specific author's experience, which is usually written in a diary or when someone tells another person about something that happened to them. Second, Factual Recount refers to a type of newspaper report that aims to inform the reader about a specific event by providing facts or evidence as supporting data. Third, Imaginative Recount is a type of recount writing that uses factual knowledge about an event to create a fictitious account of the incident in order to help readers understand the event by presenting a fictional recount as real as possible. Fourth, a procedural recount is a type of recount that scientists frequently use to describe an experiment so that others can replicate it. Fifth, Literary Recount is a kind of recount writing that is intended to be entertaining.

3. Methodology

Descriptive qualitative method was applied in conducting this study. The data of this study were gained from 20 out of 120 students' recount writings of the third semester who took Intermediate Genre Based Writing class purposively. Meanwhile, in collecting the data, the researchers conducted trilingual methods including observation, documentations and interview to the students and lecturer. The observation was conducted during 4 meetings of teaching recount writings where the lecturer implemented learning cycles in teaching the material. The study resulted 20 draft stories and 20 digital storytelling as part of their individual assignments. In analyzing the data, the researchers employ text classification including the schematic structure and linguistics features proposed in [22] and classified the data into three namely higher, medium and lower achievers.

4. Result and Discussion

Based on the results of the assignments given to 20 students who took the Intermediate Genre Based Writing class in the third semester, the researchers indicated that the lecturer successfully implemented digital storytelling in teaching EFL writing. Furthermore, observations imply that researchers can categorize students into three types, higher achievers, middle achievers, and lower achievers. A more detailed explanation is described as follows:

Higher achievers are students who can create teaching content that meets overall standards. Fulfilment of these standards refers to digital storytelling content that is schematic with a clear pattern of material processing, no grammatical errors, complete linguistic features, and excellent pronunciations. Meanwhile, Middle Achievers refers to students' digital storytelling content as teaching materials that almost meet the standards due to flaws in several aspects. This shortage involves the discovery of grammatical errors or incomplete linguistic features in some parts. Lower Achievers, on the other hand, refer to students who create teaching content that does not meet the standards due to a high amount of errors, and students in this category often refers to students with the lowest grade results. The errors in the digital storytelling content are caused by schematic inconsistencies, a lack of clarity in the process material, incomplete linguistic features, and numerous grammatical errors.

A. Higher Achiever

During the observation process, the researchers found several results that are considered as higher achiever results. The students in this category have succeeded in compiling their digital storytelling that meets high standard. It means that their results have schematically arranged structures, correct uses of linguistic features, proper grammatical usage, and native

pronunciation, as seen in the example below:

Fig. 2. Orientation of higher achiever recount digital storytelling

It can be seen in the figure 2 above that the student is aware of the function of orientation in recount writing by explaining what he experienced several years ago during his holiday. The figure above also reveals proper grammar usage in recount writing, begins with the usage of "I had the opportunity", that uses perfect past tense and the phrase "Several years ago" shows temporal expression.

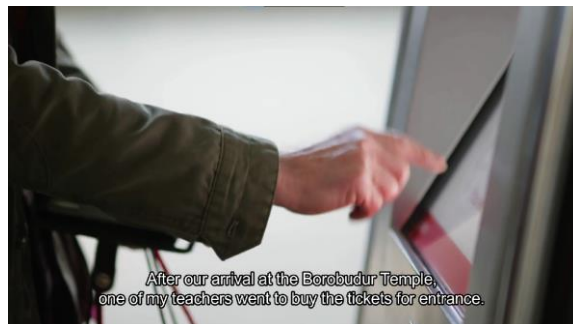Another example below shows the events of the student's recount:

Fig. 3. Events of higher achiever recount digital storytelling.

According figure 3 above, it can be seen that the student is recalling some particular events in their story, which reveals the student's understanding of the purpose of events in recount writing. The student is also aware of the essential linguistics features in recount text, the usage of temporal conjunction can be seen in the phrase "After our arrival" that suggests the continuation of events. Simple past tense is also used in the phrase "One of my teachers went to buy" which further proves that the events told in his story happened in the past.

Below is another example of events of the student's recount:

Fig. 4. Events of higher achiever recount digital storytelling.

In figure 4 above, it can be seen that this is another part of events in the student's story. It is proven by the usage of temporal conjunction in the phrase "Then" which suggests that this event is the continuation of the previous event. The student also used simple past tense in this figure, which can be seen in the phrase "we spent the rest of our time" suggesting this event happened in the past.

The figure below is the reorientation of the student's recount:

Fig. 5. Reorientation of higher achiever digital storytelling.

It can be seen from figure 5 that the student is aware of the purpose and function of reorientation in recount writing. The student stated his own personal statement regarding his story as a closing. Proper linguistics features such as adjectives and past tense can be seen in the figure, revealed in the phrase "The experiences that I had was exhausting". The phrase "it was very exciting and I had

a lot of fun" also contains simple past tense and the usage of adjectives.

With these examples, it can be concluded that students in the higher achiever category is aware of the structure in recount writing and the importance of its linguistics features. Contents included in the video is also coherent with the story, meaning that it's not out of the place. The structure is schematic, orientation, events and reorientation is presented in their respective order. Intonation and pronunciation is excellent, which helps listener's understanding. These aspects are essential in order to achieve recount digital storytelling result with high standards.

B. Middle Achievers

The researchers, on the other hand, discovered several students who are categorized in middle achievers due to a few errors in their digital storytelling content. Although the structure is well-organized, there are some lack of fluency in pronunciation, and some linguistic flaws, as shown below:

Fig. 6. Orientation of middle achiever recount digital storytelling

In the figure 6 above, it can be seen that the student included orientation in the story by using past tense and temporal expression to retell events in the past. Although in the figure 6 shows that this digital storytelling content involves recount writing linguistic features such as the temporal expression "At the end of 2018" and the past tense "one of my older sisters and I took the train", the creator did not include the title.

Another example below shows the events of student's recount:

Fig. 7. Events of middle achiever recount digital storytelling.

According to figure 7, it can be assumed that the student is aware of the function of events in recount writing. The student compiled her events in chronological order by using linguistics features such as "On the third day" which shows temporal expression. The phrase "I was amazed when I first saw this mall" focuses on the use of simple past tense, the same goes to action verbs that are also used in her content, begins with the phrase 'see', 'walked', and 'took'. Meanwhile, the phrases such as 'on the second day', 'on the third day' and 'the following day' refers to the usage of temporal conjunction in order to retell events in chronological order. Although the story is telling the story of the student specifically, the usage of pronoun "we" in the story is quite excessive. Therefore shifting the specific participants in the story to "we" instead of the student herself.

The figure below shows the reorientation of student's recount:

Fig. 8. Reorientation of middle achiever digital storytelling.

From the figure 8 above, it can be seen that the student have included reorientation and aware of its function in recount writing. This is proven by the student's final statement of her story. Some linguistics features are also present in the reorientation, begins with the phrase "we were all tired" which shows the usage of simple past tense and adjectives expression. The phrase "it was one of the memorable experiences also represents the use of simple past tense and adjectives expression.

According to these examples, researchers concluded that students in middle achiever category are mostly aware of the function of structures in recount writing. Though their use of linguistics features might not be as consistent as the higher achiever category, they already understood its purpose in recount writing.

C. Lower Achiever

The researchers also found several results that does not meet the basic standard requirements for recount writing during the observation. These results belong in the lower achiever category. The students in this category does poorly in terms of compiling both written and video quality. It means that don't have schematic structures, contains grammatical errors, mispronunciations, lack of linguistics features, and missing structure as seen in the example below:

Fig. 9. Orientation of lower achiever recount digital storytelling.

According to figure 9 above, it can be seen that the student is aware of the orientation but he is not using proper grammar for events that happened in the past. The phrase "I and My Family" is not grammatically correct either. The student also used "go" instead of "went", which indicates the use of simple present tense as opposed to simple past tense.

Another example below shows the events of student's recount:
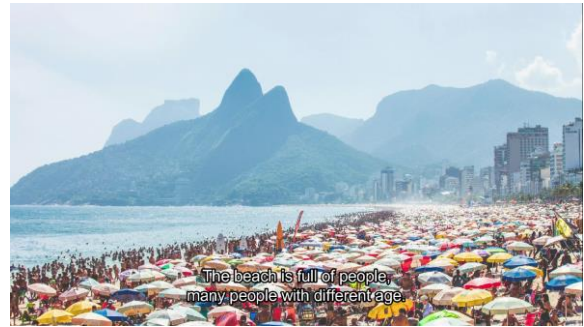

Fig. 10. Events of lower achiever recount digital storytelling.

In figure 10, it can be seen that the student used simple present tense instead of simple past tense to recall his events in the past, starting from the phrase "The beach is full of people". This grammatical error causes inconsistencies in recount writing as recount text supposed to retell events in the past.

Below is another example of events in the student's recount

Fig. 11. Events of lower achiever recount digital storytelling.

According to figure 11, it can be seen that this is the continuation of the student's story. Although the student have already included "after" as temporal conjunction in his writing, the use of simple present tense can be spotted. The phrase "we go eat mendoan together" should be written in past tense to indicate past events. Following figure 11, the researchers cannot seem to find the reorientation part of the student's recount digital storytelling result. Which further indicates that the student does not understand the purpose of reorientation in recount writing.

It can be concluded from these examples that the students in lower achiever category are not aware of the purpose of structures in recount texts since the structure does not appear to be complete. In addition, the usage of simple present tense seems to be persistent in lower achiever category. This indicates that the students are also not aware of the importance of linguistics features in recount texts. There are also many grammatical errors in terms of its usage and structure. Overall, the students in lower achiever category failed to achieve essential parts of recount writing as their results reflects what they understand in order to write a proper recount writing.

Lecturer and Students' Reflection

According to the interview given to the students of intermediate genre based writing, there were 10 chosen students to partake the interview. Most of the students said that digital storytelling further improves their creativity by requiring them to write, create, and compile their writing into a form of informative video. Digital storytelling also encouraged the students to be more active in many different aspects, therefore improving their soft skills such as speaking and writing, as those are essential for EFL learners.

The researchers also conducted an interview with the lecturer to find out the beneficial of using digital storytelling as an EFL teaching method. According to her, there are many benefits of using digital storytelling as an EFL teaching method such as enhancing students' creativity and their learning motivation. She also said that digital storytelling has the potential to boost students' interest in learning English, particularly in writing and speaking. As a teaching method, digital storytelling could help the lecturer on measuring her students' English learning abilities and understanding, especially during pandemic times.

5. Conclusion

According to the result compiled in the result and discussion, it can be concluded that some students has fully understood the essentials on writing a proper recount text and has successfully implemented their writings into digital storytelling. Referring to the interview, the lecturer states that digital storytelling is beneficial for the students in teaching EFL, mainly because digital storytelling pursue students to be more creative in their writing. Not only that it improves students' writing skill, it also improves students' English speaking abilities which is necessary for EFL learners. Digital storytelling as an EFL teaching method can be efficient and innovative for EFL students. As it requires students to become more active in their learning process, as well as improving their soft skills, importantly writing and speaking.

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