EFL STUDENTS' EXPLORATION ON ANIMAKER TO PROMOTE DIGITAL STORYTELLING LITERACY ON DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract: Creativity and innovation in language learning today is necessary to help tertiary students of EFL prepare for 4.0 industrial revolution era. Focusing on writing a descriptive text, the use of Animaker in this research aimed at developing the students' digital literacy in storytelling. In this observational study, the researchers used Animaker to produce a digital storytelling product of a descriptive text. They qualitatively surveyed and described any difficulties the students faced in using Animaker, then investigated and described the quantitative data of students' digital storytelling literacy promoted in the learning. The data collected from the questionnaires found that students faced certain difficulties in using Animaker. The process of inserting audio files became the most difficult thing to do for 80% of the students. This study also used digital storytelling rubric to assess students' digital storytelling literacy, resulting 80.05 of average score. It showed that the use of Animaker was able to foster the students' literacy up to intermediate level. Previewing all components of digital storytelling, students achieved their satisfactory level of competence by 2.37 points of average score. Despite its challenges, students' exploration on Animaker can help promote their digital storytelling literacy, one that is needed in today's learning.

Keywords: Animaker, digital, storytelling, descriptive text

INTRODUCTION

Being skilful in using English language has always been the objective of English as foreign language (EFL) learning. Its learners are required to acquire and master the four language skills–listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, EFL learning has its own challenges for its learners and teachers.

EFL students commonly experience difficulties not only in understanding but also in producing the language. They are hardly able to adjust their heart, mind, and attitude to the target language and its culture[1]. This creates problems when the learners are constructing the language orally and written. Lack of confidence, unfamiliar pronunciation, and complexity of the language structure are the problems frequently present among them in oral communication. Further, they experience vocabulary shortage and insufficiency of grammar knowledge when producing written language expressions. These common problems were also found among the research participants.

Having these challenges, the researchers were motivated to help their students overcoming or at least minimizing their EFL learning difficulties. In line with the goal of today's learning in digital era, the researchers made their students learn to write descriptive text structure by using one application of digital storytelling Animaker as a media to produce English language orally and written. Moreover, this innovative learning benefited the learners in developing their digital literacy skills to fulfil today's workforce requirements. This was to support the policy stated by the Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education in 2018 saying that today's education should satisfy the demand of 4.0 industrial revolutions.

The researchers believe that their students as teacher candidates need to acquire this digital skill to help the students to be digital-literate teachers in the future. They can use this skill to prepare a digitalized learning for their future students. Thus, these future teachers should have the skill to use internet not only for pleasure but also for developing their teaching skill in this digital era.

The research conducted was also a way of learning to stimulate the students to be active, responsive, and adaptive in learning as well as capable to use Animaker as a digital tool to produce their descriptive writing. Having the skill of using this digital storytelling application in learning, the candidate of teachers is expected to be more competitive in the digital era of education. Used as a media of learning English language, Animaker is facilitated with some features such as pictures, animated pictures, audio, and various templates to make digital storytelling products more interesting.

Digital storytelling is one way for students to learn language and to earn digital literacy. It integrates storytelling and digital technology. The skill of using digital storytelling begins with the process of writing the

story, continued with the use of DST application as a media of writing which provides some common features such as pictures, animations, diagrams, texts, and audio[2].

The use of DST in learning process has been carried out for its advantage to learners. It is effective to increase students' learning motivation[3]. Further benefit of using DST is to improve students' confidence in performing oral competence as it is facilitated with voice recorder. This is a feature of DST to narrate the content. Thus, Razmia, et al[4] recommend the use of DST as a media of learning foreign language.

Moreover, DST is potential to develop students' verbal and non-verbal skills. This research, then aims at measuring students' digital storytelling literacy based on their DST product created with Animaker application. The researchers apply eleven criteria of DST adapted from Schrock[5] to evaluate students' DST literacy. The criteria include the ability in building point of view, in fulfilling the dramatic question, in stirring emotional impact to viewers, pacing and placing the voice and sounds, creating images, managing time, and in organizing text.

Descriptive text structure becomes the focus of written text the students learns. Description is a fundamental structure among other texts. Authors of descriptive text intend to give readers information on the topic being described. They present their description in details so that it can give clear images on the topic. Having a well-written descriptive text can also affect readers' emotion and add their knowledge on the topic. Thus, descriptive text writers need use sensory words and phrases or certain figurative language such as metaphor to help them clearly describe the object of description[6].

METHOD

This research was a pilot study in which a qualitative survey was conducted after the researchers implemented the use of Animaker in learning descriptive writing. There were 19 students of a writing class participating in this research. A questionnaire was used to investigate the students' perspective on the learning challenges. A rubric then was also used to assess students' digital storytelling literacy which includes some indicators like topic, purpose, creator, audience, organization, narration, multimedia, educational value, mechanics, sources, and originality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The use of Animaker as a media in descriptive writing has created challenges as well as new experience in learning. This learning has also delivered some skills of digital storytelling literacy. These challenges and achievement are explained bellow.

Challenges in Using Digital Storytelling Animaker

Certain constraints usually emerge whenever an innovative learning is conducted by the researchers. It is commonly caused by the diversity of students' ability. This ability divergence was also found among the student participant of the research. Moreover, students commonly use internet for pleasure and for browsing references for their academic assignments. They also do not frequently experience an innovated learning which includes the use of digital technology and internet.

Almost everyone in this research claimed to have never used Animaker and produce digital storytelling product. Data show that there were only 13% of the students who claimed to have used Animaker. This proves that the use of digital storytelling through Animaker in learning has not been implemented massively. Besides, the use of free internet facilities in institutions with limited bandwidth has resulted in inadequate services for high access such as access to online digital Animaker application. This limitation makes minimal use of similar products in learning.

With all the limitations, researchers still carried out the learning. The learning process began by introducing Animaker features and properties and by demonstrating the technical ways to use them to produce an animated video as the product of digital storytelling. As a first step, students must create an Animaker account by doing registration. For this reason, students should have an email address. However, there were some students who did not have an email account so they had to create one before creating an Animaker account. After Animaker account was ready, another technical matter emerged. Students with low capacity of computer could hardly operate the application. This matter disrupts the efficiency of students' work in producing DST.

Further constraints experienced by students during learning were associated with the technique of inserting sound or music and its duration setting on each page of DST. This constraint was experienced by 80% of research participants who were categorized as beginner users of the DST Animaker application. Both of these obstacles also become the most disliked things from Animaker. Additionally, around 27% of students faced

difficulties when setting the characters and the transition to produce the expected animation. To help the students overcome or minimized those technical problems, the researchers assigned some fast learner students to help their friends. By doing so, all students can produce their own DST. The assistance was quite successful in the effort to insert audio and adjust character transitions and upload DST to YouTube before each DST can be downloaded.

One last limitation affected students' creativity in producing DST of their imagination was on the restricted access to more various images of characters and backgrounds. Students should pay to get an access to these features and properties, but none of them would. To overcome this problem, some students creatively browsed for images they wanted to suit their ideas and imagination.

Students' Digital Storytelling Literacy

The use of digital storytelling Animaker application as a medium for descriptive text writing in writing classes can encourage the emergence of student creativity in learning. At least, at the beginning of the study, after the researchers showed DST products from Animaker, students of the research participants showed their interest and enthusiasm to be able to produce similar products. The activity of writing descriptive text becomes more colorful and attractive. A strong desire to try DST's abilities made students able to surpass existing limitations and constraints.

The DST ability of students was assessed using 11 DST components by Schrock (2015) which included the ability to state the topic, mention the narrator's name, state the target audience, compile stories, narrate techniques, use audio-visual content, imply educational values, language mechanisms, state sources or references quote, and in presenting the authenticity of creative and inventive story ideas. The assessment uses 3 levels; Good (good) with a score of 3, Satisfactory (enough) with a score of 2 - 2.9, and Poor (less) with a score of 1 - 1.9.

In this research, all students achieved the highest level on the educational value aspect of DST literacy. The value of love and respect for the parents described, both father and mother, was expressed in each DST product. Also, a sense of pride and hope to be able to make parents happy was the last note presented at the end of DST pages. With its value of education, it has the potential to be used in relevant learning, especially by making it a learning medium for early learners or adolescents.

Then, 89.47% of students were able to reach sufficient level in the originality of their work. The descriptive text in each Animaker product was the result of the pure thinking of each student. Even so, in the editing process, researchers provided little input to improve the composition of sentences and to enrich the use of vocabulary in each writing. The authenticity of the text can be seen from the main ideas of each sentence contained in each page display of the Animaker.

DST capabilities in multimedia use such as the ability to include images, animation, music, and sound were achieved well by 21.05% of students. Most of the students achieved sufficient levels at a percentage of 78.95%. This shows that with all the limitations or constraints that exist in DST Animaker, all research participants succeeded in having literacy in using multimedia even though their abilities still have to be improved to reach maximum levels. This becomes possible if they continue to be encouraged to be able to use technology in learning.

Writing a description text with the presentation of a well-organized section of Identification and Description was successfully achieved by 26.32% of students. At this level, students can also manage each of their main ideas with well-composed sentences where they can provide supporting ideas to each of the main ideas.

Whereas sufficient levels of organizational aspects are achieved by as many as 68.42% of students where they can adequately display two core parts of the description text. The main sentence is also quite clearly described even though it is still undetailed. As many as 5.26% of students are at a lower level in the proper organization of sentences in each paragraph.

The DST results also prove the ability of students to bring up the practical purpose of composing texts and the ability to recognize the specific target audience is primarily achieved at a sufficient level of both as much as 63.16%. As many as 36.84% of students in the study develop good abilities in generating goals in the text, both at the beginning and the end.

In the aspect of the audience, approximately 63% of the study participants achieved sufficient levels. At this level, the DST maker does not clearly state the target audience until the end of the DST pages. The DST in Figure 2.3 is at a good level because it says the word "everyone" at the beginning of the description text which

aims to target everyone who watches, even though the person does not specify the criteria of the target audience. Only about 26% of DST products reach this level.

Good narration can definitely deliver every audience to enjoy the storyline from a text. A narration on DST is related to the production of sounds inserted in each page of the text. In the DST made by the study participants, only 5% received good levels. At this level, DST presents text narration very clearly and easily understood. Sound production speed when narrated is also set to match the display length of each slide text. Furthermore, the narrators also gave dynamics in the production of their voice so that it sounded interesting to the viewer.

Students DST literacy was also assessed by their ability to present the topic clearly and to mention the creator's name on any page of their DST product. The former and the latter ability were well-achieved by 47% of the participants. The rest of the students then did not present the topic nor mention the creator's name explicitly.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Having limitations and challenges, the students participating in this research have performed some skills of digital storytelling literacy well. Those problems somehow have encouraged most students to learn making DST. They even are motivated to keep learning to use Animaker so that they can accommodate their creative writing or use it as their future media of teaching. Then, with a collaborative work during the learning process, all students can manage to produce DST product. This achievement of digital storytelling literacy shows that each of research participants has potential to develop the skill of using DST Animaker.

Therefore, the use of Animaker in learning should be frequently conducted so that this digital storytelling potential can develop much better, not only among the students participated in this research but also those in other classes of writing or necessarily in other courses. Moreover, with any approach and method appropriate in learning as well as the maximum capacity of the internet connection, the use of Animaker can maximize this potential. Thus, the demand of EFL learning in the digital era can be fulfilled.

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