The Effectiveness of Storybird Platform for Improving Students' Writing Skill in Recount

Christianti Tri Hapsari[1], Femy Seniwegiasari[2], Nur Alviyanti Fauzi[3]

Universitas Sebelas Maret, Jl. Ir Sutami 36A, Surakarta Indonesia

femy90@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Writing in the 21st century enables writers to employ many types of digital technology and social networking. The writers are everywhere as well as the readers. The new concept of writing is to share, to encourage dialogue, and importantly to participate (Yancey 2009, p.4). There is a tool that meets those concepts, namely storybird. Storybird, describing itself as "collaborative storytelling", is a social media service that allows users to create a story to connect with users regardless of ages and places. "Two people author a Storybird—one with words, one with pictures—and then share it with their network. The final product can be printed, watched on screen, played with like a toy, or shared through a worldwide library." (Storybird, 2009). Based on those facts, a study to investigate the effectiveness of using storybird platform for improving students' writing skill is important. The samples were collected from 10 students of tenth grade of senior high school by using non random sampling. The research method was a quasi experimental study. The data was analyzed by using t-test. The result of the study showed that the use of "Story Bird Platform" was effective to improve writing skill.

Keywords: recount, storybird, writing

Introduction

Writing is culturally specific, learned behaviors which are acquired only if someone is taught; much likes the ability to swim (Brown, 2001, p.334). Brown and a writer like F. Scott Fitzgerald make analogies of the difficulties of writing to those of swimming, for even though one may learn to swim and to write this does not imply that the skill will be mastered, even if one is proficient in a language. Writing is not a spontaneous skill or acquired easily, indeed it is viewed as probably the most difficult thing to do in language (Nunan, 1999, p.271). Moreover Nunan states that writing is a complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time. It is a well known fact that writing requires the writer's full attention and concentration (Hassan, 2012, p.185).

Lots of EFL learners have problems with writing as shown through their writing products. The one of problems is the result of learners little understanding of pre-requisite knowledge for writing effectively such as content, organization, language use, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic (Hammer, 2004; Raimes 1983) as cited in Arslan (2013, p.3). Another study also found that students have difficulties in getting ideas, organizing ideas and developing details, choosing correct words and structuring ideas in correct sentences, as well as maintaining paragraph unity (Graves, 1994 as cited in Laksmi, 2006, pp. 144-145). Moreover, those difficulties result lack of vocabulary, a poor grasp of grammatical structures, the incorrect use of punctuation marks, incorrect spelling, poor paragraph and sentence structure, and illogical sequence (Hassan, 2012, p. 187). These difficulties not only affect learners' academic success, but also hinder their professional progress.

One of writing difficulties face by learners, especially students is due to inappropriate pedagogic approach. According to Hassan (2012, p.185), writing

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involves many order skills from low to high which makes writing a complex process to teach. Thus, he adds that teachers itself have to rely on trial and error methods to find out which approach should be adopted. Furthermore based on Bayat (2014, p.1133), the current approach gives insufficient opportunity to learners experiencing writing as a whole because schools mostly focus on formal features rather than content characteristics. Moreover, Bayat (2014, p. 1133) quotes that students receive only negative feedback related to errors lead to writing anxiety (Barnett, 1992; Madigan, Linton, & Johnson, 1996). Thus, dysfunctional writing styles can create obstacles throughout one's life (Hansel, 2008) as cited in Hassan (2012, p. 185). This can result in unsuccessful acts of writing and consequently, unsuccessful texts.

Writing anxiety is another factor which contributes to writing difficulties. Writing anxiety may derive from experiencing failure in the past or it may be ordinary fear of failure (Salem & Dyiar, 2014, p. 129). Factors such as personality traits, students' opinions on their writing competence, teachers' opinions, student-teacher interaction, classroom environment, and exams are among the sources of writing anxiety (Karakaya & Ülper, 2011) as cited in Bayat (2014, p.4). The fact that the act of writing leads to anxiety can be attributed to the complex nature of writing. Many studies in the area of English writing instruction have highlighted that writing anxiety is an important factor that affects the quality as well as perception of writing amongst students. Therefore, due to all the challenges students face in writing, many L2 students may feel strained or discouraged and this will eventually cause them to stop even trying to write due to this anxiety ((Al Sawalha & Foo, 2013) as cited in Salem and Dyiar (2014, p. 129)).

Due to its difficulties in acquiring, many kinds of approaches are available for the learners to be implied. One of the approaches is collaborative writing. Research has shown that collaborative writing assignments and peer editing, as done in pairs or small groups, can have numerous effective benefits for the learner. Such tasks can enhance student interaction in the EFL classroom, lower the anxiety associated with completing tasks alone and raise students' self-confidence (Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Raimes, 1998; Reid & Powers, 1993; Rollinson, 2005). As for improvements in writing, the process of peer writing and editing can be effective in raising students' awareness of important organizational and syntactical elements that they otherwise might not notice on their own. Studies by Gousseva-Goodwin (2000, p.47) and Storch (2005, p.68) further found that advanced ESL learners' collaborative essay grades were higher than those done independently and tended to have greater grammatical accuracy.

Today, in the 21st century, learning means using educational technologies to apply knowledge to new situations, analyze information, collaborate, solve problems, and make decisions (British Columbia, 2007, "21st Century Learning", para.1). Writing in the 21st century enables writers to employ many types of digital technology and social networking (Yancey 2009, p.4). It is similar to the concept of collaborative writing. A technology that engages learners to the true experience of collaboration is web 2.0. The web 2.0 advances included: high speed, free web based software and applications, platform based services, users generated content, complex social interactions, and new business models (Peachey, 2009, 16).

Some studies involving collaborative writing and web 2.0 show learners' improvements in writing and give them solutions to their problems. Beltrán (2010, p.67) states how the use of collaborative writing to write digital stories promotes learners' self expression and helps them improve their writing skill. Consequently, it

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enhances the group dynamics, negotiation and cultural knowledge of the world. Moreover, Beltrán (2009, p.52) shows how the use of "Hot Potatoes" helped elementary students improve their spelling, vocabulary, and awareness of simple sentence construction. Besides a study conducted by Ramirez (2013, p.177) found that the collaborative writing strategy supported with the use of Storybird (2.0 web technology) made learners improve specific aspects of the written language, they become more aware of the use of structures, improve their vocabulary and attempt to write more complex sentences. Yet similar study investigating the use of Storybird platform is still lack.

Realizing the fact that writing is difficult to acquire and the studies investigating the effect of using Storybird platform to improve writing skills is lack, this study aims to find out the effect of using Storybird platform to improve students' writing skill. In this research the problem is formulated as follows: "Is the use of Storybird platform effective to improve students' writing skill?"

Based on the question above, the hypotheses of this research are:

H0: there is no significant difference in the posttest mean score of writing recount text between the students who are taught by Storybird platform and those who are not taught by Storybird platform.

Ha: there is a significant difference in the posttest mean score of writing recount text between the students who are taught by Storybird platform and those who are not taught by Storybird platform.

To make the problem focus, the researchers make a limitation in this research. The researchers focus on the use of Storybird platform to improve students' skill in writing recount text.

Research Methodology

According to Airasian (2000), there were three kinds of experimental design; pre experimental design, true experimental design and quasi experimental design. As this study was conducted in a school setting, it was difficult for each subject to be randomly selected and assigned to the control and experimental groups. Therefore, it was more practical to adopt the quasi-experimental design, which provides reasonable control over most sources of invalidity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p.93). In this design, both of groups (experimental and control group) get pre test and posttest, but only experimental group get treatment. The experimental group will be taught by using Storybird platform, where control group taught by conventional method. Both of groups have the same material during the treatment process. So, the samples that are selected from first grade of senior high school included two sections, each of which contained 5 students, got from cluster sampling. One section (5 students) was used for the control group; another one (5 students) for experimental group. Both groups were taught by the researcher. This lesson aimed at enhancing students' skills in writing recount texts. The students met in class once a week. The length of the lesson was 3 meetings.

The design of the research is below:

Experimental	01	x	02
Control	03		04

(Arikunto, 2006: 79)

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O1 and O3   : Pre test

O2 and O4   : Post test

X   : Treatment

Instrument of The Study

The impact on students' learning was evidenced by two instruments including writing tests and a questionnaire. The first instrument was the writing tests administered to assess students' writing abilities in both groups. One writing test was given at the beginning of the term functioning as the pretest and the second one as the post-test at the end of the term. In each test, students were required to write a recount text. For the second instrument, to investigate what are students perception about Storybird platform, a questionnaire containing 10 items with a choice of five rating scale responses (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree) was created.

Procedure of Collecting Data

This study was carried out in two classes where different methods were employed for students' writing development. One class worked to complete a recount text using Storybird platform while the other worked using conventional method, process writing. The data collection was done in 5 weeks. For the pre-instructional period, students in both groups were pre-tested to determine their writing abilities on the first week. During weeks 2-4, students in both groups were taught about how to write four kinds of paragraph in the classroom with PowerPoint and supplementary sheets. On the third week, students in the Storybird group were taught about how to use Storybird platform in class and created Storybird accounts. Then they were asked to use Storybird to create a recount text. Each student creates recount with pictures then share it. The final product can be printed, watched on screen, and shared with other students. Students can also give feedbacks to their friends' work. Students in the other group performed the same writing assignments, but worked in the classroom. Students in both classes would submit each writing assignment to the teacher for feedback and improved their work. In the end of week 5, both groups are assigned to post test.

In sum the researchers will do some steps in this research process. The steps are:

1. Selecting the population of the research.
2. Selecting two groups as samples.
3. Conducting the experiment by following three steps:
   a) Pre-test
      Pre-test was the first steps before the researchers give the treatment, and they will do the pre-test by written test. The researchers ask the students to write a recount text with the topic based on their unforgettable moment. And it conducted in control and experimental groups.
   b) Treatment
      The researchers will conduct the treatments on the two groups. There are different treatments. Students in experimental group will be taught by using Storybird as media to improve students writing skill in recount text, while students in control group will be taught by using conventional method. In this research there are three times of treatments will be given to the students.
   c) Post-test

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The post-test would be held after the writer finished the treatment in experimental group, and the test was similar with the pre-test. It would show whether the Storybird Platform was giving impact in students writing skill in recount or not.

4. Giving the score after conducting the test.
5. Determining the result of the two classes.
6. Calculating the score.

Method of Analyzing Data

For analyzing students' writing exercises, the researchers use Brown (2004, p.243). To find the score of the students, the researchers use a scoring data formulation:

Where: $s = \dfrac{TS \, X \, 100}{TMS}$

S: Score
TS: Score of each student
TMS: Total maximum score

Procedure of Data Analysis

After the data had been collected, the writer analyzed the data by using statistical computation. The statistical computation was used to analyze the data from the two groups, experimental and control groups.

The data would be analyzed by using t-test. If the t value was higher than the t table, it means that there was a significant difference between the two means. On the other hand, if the t- value was lower than t-table means there was no significant difference between the two means. To get the result of this research, the writer use the test formula as follow:

$$t = \frac{\overline{X}_1 - \overline{X}_2}{s\sqrt{\dfrac{1}{n_1} + \dfrac{1}{n_2}}}$$

in which:

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}}$$

Where:

$\bar{x}_1$ = mean of experimental group students

$\bar{x}_2$ = mean of control group students

n_1 = number of sample of the experimental group

n_2 = number of sample of the control group

s^2 = standard deviation

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Finding

Since there were only two groups involved in this study, a t-test was used to determine if there was any statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental and control group. The amount of p-value for the measure of accuracy is <.05, thus we assume that there is a significant difference between the performances of the two groups.

Based to the data analysis of the research, it could be said that the use of "Storybird Platform" was effective to improve students writing skill in recount text. There was a significant difference in writing skill between the students of experimental group and those of control group. It can be seen from the final scores of the experimental group and the control group. The mean of pre-test of the experimental got 67.40 and the control group got 70.40. After two treatments that gave by the researchers in experimental group, the post-test score of experimental group become higher than control group, where the experimental group got 79.00 and the control group got 74.00. It showed that the t-value was higher than the t-table (t-value: 2.133 > t-table: 2.384) and Sig. 0.035 for significant 0.05, 0.035<0.05. It means that there was a significant difference in speaking skill between the students who were taught by being given "Story bird Platform" and those who were not.

Discussions

This study was undertaken to assess, via a pretest-posttest using a quasi-experimental design, the effect of collaborative writing activity using Storybird platform had on students' writing abilities. The result of the independent samples *t*-test analysis from the post-test administration indicated that the Storybird platform group had a better performance than the conventional method.

This might be because of two reasons: the collaborative method, special feature of Storybird platform which motivated students to learn more efficiently and creatively. As for the collaboration method, students were provided with opportunities to read, review, and correct other members' work. With the feedback they got from the student readers, the student writers are able to learn about their writing problems such as inappropriate language use, misspellings, wrong mechanics, and illogical organization. Comments from other users which can be used for reconsidering both ideas and organization can lead to meaningful revisions for the student writers. The findings were found to be in accordance with many previous studies in that the use of constructive feedback can enhance the quality of student discussion responses (Ertmer & Stepich, 2004; Ciftci & Kocoglu, 2012) as cited in Suwantarathip & Wichadee (2014, p.154).

It is the tool that supports students to help one another in learning efficiently without restriction of time and place. Students can gain knowledge by reading other works and increase understandings of how sentences should be corrected by getting comments from others. Due to the range of contents available, Storybird helps students to be creative, innovative and effective in creating composition. Its social, simple, and fun concept makes Storybird more appealing to students. Thus, writing will be much more fun than before. The finding is also supported by positive attitudes students had towards collaborative writing out of class using Storybird platform. It is in accordance with what Ramírez (2013, p. 178) said that motivation represents a defining factor because when learners feel motivated to learn, the results in terms of participation and

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writing production increase. That was what happened when students wrote using Storybird.

Conclusion

     Based to the data analysis of the research, it could be concluded that the use of "Storybird Platform" was effective to improve students writing skill in recount text. In this study, the use of Storybird helps students improve their writing. They developed creative thinking and experienced more fun process in writing (Anderson, 2010, p.4). Along the process, the participants felt encouraged to create their stories because Storybird offers the possibility to do collaborative writing using art galleries to create storyboards, and that was new for the groups of learners (Ramirez, 2013, p. 178). The outcomes shown represent an opportunity to reflect about education and consider the promotion of experiences where learners have the chance to use diverse web tools. The use of the internet to develop learning tasks is encouraging for learners but demotivating when there is not support from the teachers (Ramirez, 2013, p. 178).

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