INNOVATING DIGITAL "J-SLATE" IN WRITING REPORT TEXTS

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Abstract

Creating a report text using technology in the cyber-based era is so unique, especially for the ninth graders of junior high schools. To support technological activities, J-SLATE (*Jostle to Write on the SLATE*) is proposed in this paper to guide students in writing report texts consisting of five ways: *Sail, Lamp, Acceleration, Tool, and Eyot*. Three sequences of the R&D model (Plomp:1997) were used to develop this product. At the end of the research, J-SLATE provides tasks and activities related to basic competence, and it also offers digital games based on the students' needs to explore the students' ideas in creating report texts creatively.

Keywords: *Digital, Report Texts, Writing*

Introduction

Agile changing technology is one of the keys to apply innovative media in the teaching and learning processes. As English teachers update the media, students can accomplish communicative competence. According to Chapelle [1], most English teachers agree that their students need to practice using English outside the classroom if they are to increase their communicative competence, but the "practice" consists of different types of English language use. To sustain students' practices, English teachers modify an attractive media to transfer the materials to their students by converting the materials into a cyber-based platform.

Developing teaching media for the ninth graders of junior high schools in teaching writing demands special features. On the one hand, it requires challenging tasks and activities in which students get involved in learning enjoyably. The activities can be created using interactive media comprising graphics, texts, videos, audios or any combinations of these [2]. The activities should be concerned with the level of functional literacies. The students

are able to communicate with each other both spoken and written forms to solve problems in daily activities. On the other hand, for teachers, it provides a spot for them to give feedback to the students' writing effectively.

The researcher found that students had essential problems in writing a report text. They have not learnt it in the previous class, so that they were confused to differentiate between report texts and descriptive texts. They were lack of knowledge concerning the texts and how they are typically organized based on the purposes, and they only have a few references to elaborate their ideas in description parts. The intriguing technology media were rarely used in the teaching of writing, whereas it can assist students in developing their higher order thinking skills [3]. To overcome such problems, the researcher developed J-SLATE (*Jostle to Write on the SLATE*) in a digital form in creating report texts consisting of five ways: *Sail, Lamp, Acceleration, tool, and Eyot*.

Cyber-based Platforms in Teaching English

The use of technologies as teaching media has been the spirit to facilitate the students in dealing with cyber-based platforms. The other functions are to increase learner's motivation, learning, social interactions, and engagement [3]. In accordance with challenging tasks and activities, technologies can be developed based on the students' needs. For example, activities are developed to exploit this source in a meaningful way, ensure that they are realistic, work well with the texts, explain clearly, and relate them to students' interests and target needs.

Wilkinson [4] adds that the teachers can create suitable tasks and the environment in which students share, collaborate, and create knowledge in meaningful and linguistically rich ways. In this sense, teachers must acquire the arts of teaching: responsive, creative and intuitive capacities, the craft of teaching: mastery of a full repertoire of skills and practices, and the science of teaching: research-informed and decision-making [5]. By providing students with detail information about objectives and learning activities, the students become excited in learning English.

Writing Report Texts Media Developed
To reach the goal of communication in writing, it is necessary to search for ideas, combine words into sentences, and develop paragraphs into kinds of texts. Creativity is needed in these parts. Hyland [6] lists three points that writing has a social view: a) writing as social interaction happens between writers and readers for adding a communicative dimension to writing; b) writing as a social construction, and language is not only just a means of self-expression, but also a means of community members' expressions to use the language in society; and c) writing as power and ideology is related to the relationship between power and ideology that may exist in the social interaction and social construction.
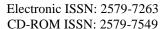
Developing new writing materials can be exceedingly satisfying, both professionally and creatively to offer students more tailored learning experiences. The teachers can explore this area to gain a better understanding of the particular skills or features involved. The materials are produced for students in practice ways, and their physical appearances play a crucial part in providing the quality and impact, arousing interest, and encouraging students to take part in the activities.

Genre or text-based identification in languages of communication indicates that students will need learning contexts in which they will use the language. How language works in contexts using writing skill like brainstorming, planning, drafting, editing, or polishing. In constructing the texts, the students can group texts and represent their ideas in using the language to respond to recurring situations. Text types are divided into two parts, namely literary texts and factual texts. The informational report is the example of factual texts. The purpose of an information report describes "the ways things are" in our natural, built and social environment by classifying things, then describing their special characteristics. Information reports package information and is found in brochures, lectures, textbooks, research assignments, reference articles, government documents, and encyclopedias. The schematic structure consists of a general statement (or classification) that provides information about the subject matter and description of aspect to list and elaborate on the parts or qualities of the subject matter [7]. In writing a report text, the students have the ability to create facts in describing and giving information about the subject.

Promoting J-SLATE

To serve teachers in delivering materials to students attractively, the researcher promotes J-SLATE as guidance for the ninth graders of junior high schools in writing report texts. In essence, J-SLATE has five main ways. The *sail* is the first activity for students to select the topics and technical language through given mixed songs. The *lamp* is the second way to identify and write facts and opinions. The a*cceleration* consists of some texts to help the students to distinguish descriptive texts and report texts. The *tool* is a "save and edit" style to create creative report texts. The last way, the *eyot* is used for teachers to give students feedback in accordance with the provided template.

Methodology

The researcher selected Plomp's model of Research and Development [8] in conducting this research. It is used to develop a digital "J-SLATE" form as media for writing report texts by following three series of stages: exploration, developing, and internal evaluation: Forum Group Discussion (FGD). The research was carried out for the ninth graders of a public and a private junior high schools in Yogyakarta. She has designed two instruments before doing the observation, interview, and documentation in collecting the data as described below.

a. The instrument for fulfilling the need analysis is an exploration stage: observation guidelines, interview guidelines to help the researcher to elicit information from the students and documentation.

b. The instrument for reviewing the prototype is a review stage: namely two experts reviewed the prototype using a questionnaire about the developed media. The questions are divided into three components, namely the aptness of content, the language, and the graphic. The result of the experts' judgment questionnaire was used to revise the first draft of the prototype.

Finally, the data from the needs analysis and the expert judgment questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively through a descriptive approach. The researcher simplified the model by modifying and choosing some stages to be applied in the study. The model of media development in the research is as follows: (a) Exploration: Researcher conducted the observation, interview and documentation to identify problems to get the needs analysis. (b) Developing media: Researcher developed the media that cognate the course grid. (c) FGD: Before the media were tried out, two experts reviewed them. The researcher got feedback and suggestions for the first revision media. Based on experts' feedback and suggestions, the prototype of media needed further revisions and improvements.

Finding(s) and Discussion

In developing the digital J-SLATE media for writing report texts, the researcher conducted three stages, each of which can be explained, as follows:

a. Exploration by Collecting Information

The researcher directly observed the teaching of writing to obtain the necessary data. She wrote and analyzed the teacher's performance in terms of building the students' critical thinking skills based on the observation guideline. The teacher is reluctant to apply the modern technology in teaching writing because it requires a lot of time to design it and it is difficult to classify and give feedback to students' writing directly. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an "admin" platform to solve the teachers' problem.

Interviewing the ninth graders of junior high schools was also conducted by the researcher to know the target needs and learning needs. The two results were described as follows: 1) From the students' necessities, wants,

and lack side: The students' objective of learning English writing was to write report texts, but they often got woolly to differentiate between report texts and descriptive texts. 2) Next, from learning needs side: the students wanted to create report texts by using an interesting media for selecting the topics and technical language, write facts to describe the subject and create report texts using the provided template in group or individual tasks and activities. The students also wanted the teachers to give detailed explanations when the students got difficulties for either materials, media or feedback on their writing directly.

Then, she did documentation; she found that all of the schools used K-13 curriculum and types of texts especially report texts are taught for the ninth graders of junior high schools both in the first and second semester. The texts have never been taught in a class before, but they appear in national examinations. To improve students' understanding, it is better to develop a writing report text template, so that the students can identify, imitate, and modify their texts easily.

b. Developing the Prototype

The researcher continued to develop the first draft of digital J-SLATE media that cognate the course grid. J-SLATE stands for *Jostle to Write on the SLATE* using the laptop or smartphone. It is an innovative media with jostle activities to serve the students in selecting the slate (as a base for writing). When they are writing kinds of texts, they have prepared a pen and a spot of ink. She developed the writing materials through tasks and activities based on the basic competencies (KD): 6.2 (Mengungkapkan makna dan langkah

retorika dalam esei pendek sederhana dengan menggunakan ragam bahasa tulis secara akurat, lancar dan berterima untuk berinteraksi dalam konteks kehidupan sehari-hari dalam teks berbentuk procedure dan report), and then elaborated them using a genre-based and communicative approach. Writing a report text was picked out to overcome the students' problems to write report texts creatively. The five ways in "J-SLATE" are discussed, as follows:

Fig. 1. Digital "J-SLATE" for Teaching Writing

Digital J-SLATE media is equipped with a password and assessment scores. The students can see the score directly. The teacher gave the students the password to open the first activity. They will get the next password from the previous score activity. If they do not get the minimum score, they can neither continue the next way nor get the password.

The ***Sail¹*** is a way of J-SLATE used for exploring students' ideas and triggering students' creativity in determining a subject that will be described. The students are given two sailing activities that explain how to select the topic and look for the technical language. The purpose of using them is to know the general idea of the paragraph and mention the technical term that may be used in the subject. The two activities are described as follows:

(a) The sailing "topic" activity: It is an amazing activity using mixed songs. The students listen to the mixed songs,

then several topics appeared. They have to choose a topic in accordance with the content of the songs. Then, students also complete part of speech tasks from the given songs to build up the students knowledge about the components of sentences.

(b) The sailing "technical language" activity: This activity is used to help the students elicit information on the subject. Then, the students can click a technical language based on the provided subject.

The ***Lamp2*** focuses on giving an opinion to help the students make a *fact* (something that is true). In this way, students can identify how to write *facts and opinions* through the games. The students write an information report by including details that describe their subject. Here is an example of lamp activity: Read a text that relates to report texts, Identify facts and opinions and Write the facts based on the given subject.

The ***Acceleration3*** is a way for the students to differentiate between a descriptive text and a report text. They have the same function that describes something to explain but differ the specific or general structures. Here are examples of two activities in the acceleration:

(a) Accel activity: It has a column that shows students the differences between a descriptive text and a report text. They can learn from both generic structures and language use. It provides kinds of tasks to develop the students' understanding of those texts.

(b) Eration activity: The students do this activity by making a list of questions related to the subject that they want to describe. Then, they write their answers by adding information from resources (books, internet, television, or interviewing people).

The ***Tool4*** is a unique way to encourage students to make a report text using provide a template. It consists of a general opening statement in the first paragraph, a series of paragraphs about the subject, and a concluding paragraph. This media provides a "save and edit" style that can help the students write, edit and save their writing. Here is an example of the tool activity: Choose the picture, Write a report text by the provided template, Click the save or edit style (It is used for editing.), Finally, submit it to the teacher.

Eyot5 is an "admin" platform for the teacher to check the students' writing easily. It is the facility for the teacher to help them in giving feedback to students' writing through cyber-based platforms. If the students submit their writing, the teachers can identify and read the platforms directly.

c. Evaluation by FGD

The researcher has developed the first draft of the media called "J-SLATE". The two expert judgments validated the J-SLATE media through Forum Group Discussion (FGD) in the internal evaluation stage, by filling out a questionnaire about the developed media. They filled in three componential questions of the aptness of content, the language, and the graphic. Based on experts' feedback and suggestions, the prototype of media needed further revisions. There were some revisions, such as revisions of the aptness language: In the *eyot* section, for example, the platform is not written in English. Then, the researcher revised and changed the language into English. The aptness of the graphic: In the *acceleration* section, for example, the color of the slide given is too light. Then, the researcher revised it to make the slide soft.

Fig. 2. The Revision of *Eyot* Way

d. The Result of the Research

The research results found that tasks and activities in the digital J-SLATE (five ways: *Sail, Lamp, Acceleration, tool, and Eyot)* media were suitable for the basic competence. It also offered digital games based on the students' needs to explore the students' ideas in creating report texts creatively. The provided writing template along with its save and edit style is easy for students to write a report. The last, the *eyot* way is suitable for the teachers to check the students' writing.

Conclusion(s)

Writing a report text is a new text type for the ninth graders of junior high schools to master. The students got confused to distinguish between a descriptive text and a report text, so that they wanted their teacher to pick out the materials, tasks, and activities that could improve their knowledge in writing by using innovative media for teaching writing related to students' needs.

Therefore, the researcher decided to develop the prototype of "J-SLATE" media and serve their functions in developing students' writing of a report text in five ways, namely *Sail, Lamp, Acceleration*, *tool*, and *Eyot*. It consists of challenging tasks and activities in every way by selecting the topic and looking for the technical language using mixed songs,

practicing in writing facts, creating a report text using the provided template to improve students' creativity, and providing an "admin" platform for the teacher to check the students' writing. It had been validated through the Forum Group Discussion (FGD) and the results revealed that J-SLATE provided tasks and activities related to the basic competence. It also offered digital games based on the students' needs to explore the students' ideas in creating report texts creatively. This research represents the re-imagination of new cyber-based research in English Education.

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