



THE USE OF WRITEABOUT.COM AS A PLATFORM TO TEACH WRITING IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

The teacher can use writeabout.com to teach writing to engage students to write more since good writing has long process and needs a lot of practice. By applying this method, the teacher can use Writeabout.com, a website that can help students to improve their writing skill. The use of Writeabout.com can help students have a more interesting way to write and to solve students' problems. Most problems students have is getting idea, so this website can help by providing thousands ideas for writing starter. It can be applied for senior high school students because most of them have android to access this website. The objective of this paper is to help the teacher find new technique in order to increase students' interest to write. Through writeabout.com, the students can upload their writing and get responses from some people and even native, and they can get new friends in website. In sum, there are many advantages that can students find by learning through writeabout.com.

Key words: *Writeabout.com, Interest, Writing*

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential skill to be achieved by students in learning a language. As one of the productive skills, writing requires language learners to shape sentences and express ideas and thoughts into readable information so the message can be received well by the readers. According to Bello (1997), writing increases language acquisition because learners deal with words, sentences, and other elements of writing to convey their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class. Having a good writing skill can be helpful especially for students to function successfully in their academic areas. Furthermore, it is a necessary skill to possess to be functional, productive and competent in the 21st century.

Despite its importance, writing is not an easy task to achieve since it requires hard work, lengthy steps, enough time, and more practice. Nunan (1989) agreed that "it is easier to learn to speak than to write no matter if it is a first or second language". Writing and learning to write has always been one of the most

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complex language skills. This is similar to what Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that “there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for the second language learners to master”. Students have to combine a lot of components to create a good writing, starting from grammar to cohesion and coherence in writing. These will be challenging for many students, not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text.

Teachers as the ones who set the writing class have to make a new innovation and more creative to teach writing. Students have to be encouraged to write more for composing a good writing needs a lot of practices. As we know that technology has been involved in every area in today’s world. In such circumstance, English teaching couldn’t have remained intact from the effect of technology (Zorko, 2009). Teachers can utilize technology as a media in order to stimulate students’ creativity and increase students’ interest in writing. Ozkan (2011) also stated that technology contributing the lesson plans is expected to promote interaction and motivation of teachers and students during writing lessons.

Writing mostly does with a paper and a pen in the classroom which still a traditional way. Students often think it boring and make it difficult to gain interest to write about. Life in this technological era is much affected by internet which can make everything easier. Computers and internet have been a very crucial part of our lives and teaching activities in many aspects (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). This should be applied in teaching learning activity especially in writing class which make a significant impact on teaching and learning situation. Therefore, applying it on writing activity will be an effective way to encourage students to write more with thousands ideas and hopefully will increase students’ writing ability.

Based on the informal interview to some senior high school students, they always have difficulty on getting a topic and still have problem on constructing the ideas into sentence. Another problem, the lack of using digital media is also a complaint for them, and only few teachers who utilize it in their teaching learning process. In addition, students admit the usage of media in writing encourage them to write more and obtain topic and idea during their writing. This kind of stimulant has to be applied in all writing class to foster students’ motivation and improve their ability.

There are some previous researchers who agreed the use of technology in teaching learning process is important. Scrivener(2010)stated that new technology is widely available, much cheaper, in schools, in people’s home and in their pockets. Students do not have to print out all their work. Meanwhile, Sri (2016) stated that technology and internet were mostly needed by some people. The available of internet connection helped the lecturers and others educators in designing learning activities. By using technology and internet as media, students will enjoy and be interested in the writing process.

There are also some previous studies that used ICT to increase students’ interest to write. First, research finding obtained by Lutfian (2011) indicates that the use of the web blog is effective to improve students’ writing skills and

increase students' interest to write. The learning process became more interesting and the students enjoyed the writing process. Second, research finding obtained by Yunus and Salehi (2012) indicate that the use of facebook groups is an effective tool to increase students' interest and improve their writing skill. Then, research finding by Marsden and Irvine (2012) show that teaching writing by using blogging and laptop computers can encourage students to write.

Based on the explanation above, the author offers a solution to gain motivation and interest of EFL students which can affect to the improvement of their writing ability. Using digital media such as blog in teaching writing also can help both parties, students and teacher. It is done to improve the students ideas, engage students to write more, and expanding the students creativity in using media to practice writing. Therefore, the writer is interested in discussing about teaching writing by using Writeabout.com

Write About is a web blog and a digital writing platform for classrooms created by educators who believe writing should be fun and sharing should be easy. Writeabout.com gives teachers a tool to choose or create writing prompts or have students choose a writing prompt they are interested in. Students can receive line-by-line feedback from teachers. Teachers have the option of annotation or direct messaging their students. This will force students to create writing that is geared toward a wider audience, which can give quite different results than asking students to craft an essay or a journal that will be read by the teacher alone.

On this site, students can work together to craft a classroom blog or work independently to develop their writing on a given topic. Much of the writing students will do in their future work may be digitally-based, so learning to write in the digital sphere is a key skill to develop. Moreover, most students love getting the chance to share their writing through a blog, so it can be great motivation for reluctant writers.

B. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WRITEABOUT.COM AS A PLATFORM TO TEACH WRITING

This technique will be implemented to Grade 11 of senior high school students in writing a report text. Based on Basic Competence number 4.13 of the 2013 Curriculum, "students should be able to get meaning of factual report, oral and written expression about people, animals, things, characteristics and nature phenomenon, related to materials of grade XI" (Kemendikbud, 2016). Report text is chosen because in syllabus of students grade 11, the evaluation that should be achieved is appropriate with the purpose of teaching writing through writeabout.com that enable students to get feedbacks and comments from classmates and teachers after publishing their writing.

There are some stages in implementing Write About as a platform to teach writing. They are three parts of teaching; pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching activities. The calculative time is about 50 minutes per meeting.

1. Pre-Teaching Activities

In the pre-teaching activities, teachers usually greet the students and ask students' feeling; for example, "Good morning, students." and "How are you today?". Then, the teachers check the attendance of the students. After that, teachers tell the goal and objectives that should be reached by the students at the end of the class. Next, the teachers introduce what will be learned, the students will learn part of paragraph in writing.

After that, the teacher also motivates the students by telling them the goals or the objectives that the students should achieve at the end of the lesson. Teacher activates the students' existing knowledge toward the topic or it is called *brainstorming*, then asks some questions to the students relating to the topic. For example, "Do you know what phenomena that happen around us? Can you tell it shortly?". Next, students answer the questions based on their own experience and thought. Then, teachers give brief explanation about how to answer these questions and express their argument through writing.

Then, students are asked whether they have created a blog and use that blog for publishing their writing before. Some students might know or might not know. So, teachers explain what is Write About and ask them that all their writing will be done in this web.

2. Whilst-Teaching Activities

Whilst-teaching activities are those activities conducted during teaching process. In this phase, the teacher leads the students to the main activity in the teaching learning process. After giving explanation about Write About, teachers demonstrate how to create Write About account in front of the class and the students follow it.

- a. Teacher and students open Write About.
- b. Students easily log on to Write About by going to www.writeabout.com, and it is very table friendly and desktop friendly.
- c. Teachers enroll the students to the writing class through a code that are given when teacher log in, and students use it everytime they log in with a username and a password.

The teacher guides and controls the students during writing process by using writeabout.com to see the development of each student. They are as follows:

a. Observing

The students try to understand the phenomenon happening around them. Then, the students determine the main idea, specific information, and certain information about the topic. Teacher can give a decided topic for all students and/or let students go with their own idea. If students can not find an idea, they can simply use the feature of writeabout.com which provides thousands idea as a writing starter. They can choose one that can be categorized as report text idea

b. Questioning

The learning activity in this phase is asking questions about information that is not understood from what is observed or questions to obtain additional information about what is observed. The student may ask about the unfamiliar words, the generic structure or the grammar used in writing report text. Then, the

students ask how to find the main idea, specific information, and certain information.

c. Exploring

In this point, students find information about the topic from text books, the internet and other sources which can help them to understand the topic, and then they start to write. When they are going to write, here is the page they will see. They can easily add an image, record audio, and narrate their writing.

If their writing do not finish, they can save their work as a draft. It will go to their page as they log in next time. If they are ready to publish it, they can set it in four easy options; teacher, class, school, and public.

d. Associating

In this stage, students can publish their writing to writeabout.com. Teacher gives assignment to students per week. They need to write and publish it at least one post per week. As soon as they finish the post they are free to do whatever they want throughout their write about time. It means students can comment on one of those writing as they are reading it. The students also wait for responses and feedbacks from other members related to their writing.

The students note several comments and feedbacks from their classmates through writeabout.com. Then, they begin to revise their writing based on the comments through the management and guidance from the teacher. Teacher should give suggestion to improve students' writing and give conclusion by commenting in writeabout.com. Next, teacher asks students to revise what should be revised based on the correction given.

e. Communicating

The students present their report text in front of the class, then the teacher and the other students evaluate their writing which has been presented. Then, the other students can give the suggestions and feedbacks about the topic presented.

3. Post-Teaching Activities

In this phase, the students can share or display their finished work using Write About and give overall comments on how successful their work has been. The teacher can do follow-up work on any area of the language that still needs work. There are records for teachers about how their classes progress on writing, for example student statistics, total words, and average words per post. Through this record, teachers can see how much students' writing progress. In the end of semester, teachers take assessment about students' writing which is used to assess whether the students participate in effectively or not.

C. Advantages and disadvantages of Using Writeabout.com

Based on LaFave (2017) and Brooks (2015) that there some benefits of using Writeabout.com to teach writing:

1. Share writing

Students can share their writing such as poem, poetry, short stories, and essay to member of Writeabout.com

2. Getting feedbacks

After publishing their writing, students can get feedback such as likes, comments, and recommendations from the members of Writeabout.com.

3. Getting recommendation

Students can get recommendation from other writers which writings are good to be read.

4. Make friends

Students can get a lot of new friends from the community by being active in giving comments and recommendations to other writers. Their classmates can be included which belong to this community.

5. Getting information and inspiration

Students can get a lot of information and inspiration to write by reading a lot of writings published by the people in Writeabout.com

The disadvantage of this website is free accounts are limited to 5 posts per student. Unlimited writing for an individual teacher and their students is \$49.95/year, and school-wide accounts are available for \$995 which is quite expensive.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Writeabout.com is one technique in teaching writing that enables students to get feedbacks from other writer such as their classmates, their friends or even from native. Teaching writing through writeabout.com may increase students' interest and motivation to write or complete writing assignment. If the students have already interested to writing activity, they will consider this activity such as a habitual. In conclusion, the use of writeabout.com may increase students' interest to write, and improve their writing ability.

Suggestions

In writing class the teacher can use this technique to improve students' interest and motivation in learning English. It is hoped that by using this material as the learning sources, it can attract students' interest to write. To increase students' interest and motivation to write, teacher can modify this technique or find other techniques in teaching writing by using technology/ ICT. (writeabout.com).

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