IMPLEMENTING WEBLOGS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM

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2008

ABSTRACT

Hitherto the blogging phenomenon has become the most popular medium of communication among the youth. Thus, it is essential to discover how these weblogs can be implemented in the classroom environment and study the students' perception towards the approach. This research is an action based in nature whereby the researcher has implemented the weblogs in the classroom. The group was given exposure to the weblogs. They blogged their entry every week pertaining to the topic taught. A questionnaire was given to each student and several interview sessions were conducted to explore the students' perception of this blogging phenomenon. A Content analysis was conducted to analyze the students' blogs .In short, the intent of this project was to look into the implementations of weblogs in a language classroom in order to explore the pattern of usage pertaining to selection of topics or areas, frequency of entry, monitoring system, virtual and face to face interaction, to discover the advantages and disadvantages perceived by the students and also to ascertain the role of weblogs in enhancing students' reflections on what being taught in class. The findings revealed that weblogs act as intermediary tool to improve literacy level through online communication and an access to experience creative and free expression through writing. Moreover, it is also noted that weblogs allow students to engage actively in writing that improve motivation for learning without much pressure and anxiety. The application of weblogs in English language learning environments facilitates, encourages and creates a conducive environment for the students' acquisition of language.

(Keywords : implement, weblogs, entry , student , perception)

Acknowledgements

Table of Content

LIST OF FIGURES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A "blog" or "Weblog" is a Web page containing brief, chronologically arranged items of information. Weblogs take a variety of forms – a diary, a series of book review, news service, reports of activity on a project, the journal of an expedition, a photographic record of a project, or any one of a number of other forms. What blogs have in common is that they consist of brief entries arranged in reverse chronological order that are updated frequently and regularly.

Weblogs (or blogs) are becoming a "new form of mainstream personal communication" (Rosenbloom, 2004, p. 31) for millions of people to publish and exchange knowledge/information, and to establish networks or build relationships in *the world of all blogs*, the so-called "blogosphere". Weblog-building technologies (or blogging tools) bring new capabilities, such as web publication and communication, to average people, especially those non-technical users. They are designed to facilitate simple and fast creation of web content without much technical or programming skill. Recent releases of blogging tools have been further improved to provide enhanced features for between-blog interactivity; thus promoting the creation of social networks among bloggers. As an innovative social computing technology that enables *web based word-of-month* (through blogging activities), weblog was recently identified as among the top "10 tech trends to watch in 2005" by *Fortune* magazine (Vogelstein et al., 2005, p. 43).

Hitherto the blogging phenomenon has become the most popular medium of communication. Weblog popularity has surged over the last few years, resulting in 6 million (www.technorati.com) active blogs worldwide by the end of 2004. According to Sifry (2004), founder and CEO of *Technorati* which is well-recognized for its blog tracking/ranking service, over 12,000 new weblogs are created daily and an average of at least 4.6 weblogs are being updated every second. In a telephone survey of American Internet users, Pew Internet & American Life Project reported an increase of 58% weblog readership from February to November 2004, and reached 32 million readers (27% of the American online users) (BusinessWeek online, 2005). Because of its popularity, it is essential to discover how these weblogs can be implemented in the classroom environment and study the youth's perception towards the approach.

This research is an action based in nature whereby the researcher implemented the weblogs in the classroom. The group was given exposure to the weblogs. They blogged their entry every week pertaining to the topic taught. Interview sessions were conducted to explore the students' perception of this blogging phenomenon. A Content Analysis method was employed: The blogs were compiled and the content was analyzed.

1.1 Statements of Problems

The incorporation of technology in language teaching does not take into account the effective pedagogical approach. According to Schwienhorst (1997), "most of the current notions about the internet and multimedia in the context of language learning often lack the pedagogical background to make them useful in the context of second language learning''. This statement, thus, is the departure point for this study.

1.2 Research Aims

The study is significant because it employs weblogs in a classroom environment and seek to discover student' perception of them. The outcome of the research should be the base for instructors of higher learning institutions to design a module that inculcate weblogs so as to prepare the graduates for the demand and needs of the present information society.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To implement weblogs in a classroom
- To determine students' perception of weblogs
- To discover the advantages and disadvantages of using weblogs.
- To enhance students' reflection of what being taught.
- To develop creative and free expression through writing.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Some people feel that the information in the blogs are 'only at our finger tips' as George Packer (2004) says that he enjoys the immediacy of Weblogs. However, he argues that they are written by "very bright young men who never leave their rooms". Furthermore, he states that 'they remain private, written only for selective audience who speaks the same language, 'written in the language and tone of knowingness, insider shorthand, instant mastery' (Packer, 2004). However, there are many number of Weblogs written to inform the general public; the great Arts & Letters Daily (n.d.) and the Weblogs created by the press like *The Guardian* newspaper in the UK (Guardian Unlimited, n.d.) are examples.

The challenge in education, especially, in language learning is to use Information and Communication tools to pave ways in achieving maximum benefits using minimum resources while teaching language learners for specific purposes. The role of computer technology, thus, becomes essential in inculcating new and innovative ways to deliver subject matter and training opportunities. Computer technology helps to move beyond the information age of knowledge sharing in language learning to a more holistic approach in an integrated virtual learning environment involving human to computer interactivity and human to human interaction (Schwienhorst, 1997)

Meanwhile internet technology is expected to offer more opportunities for learner-control and learner-centred rather than instructor based language learning environment besides increasing motivation and connections to the real world (Valdez et al., 1995).). Lowe & William (2004) states that "with the teacher no longer the overly predominant active reader and responder of student texts, students, as a community, take more ownership of their writing". However, the incorporation of technology in language teaching does not take into account the effective pedagogical approach. According to Schwienhorst (1997), "most of the current notions about the internet and multimedia in the context of language learning often lack the pedagogical background to make them useful in the context of second language learning."

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

The method used for each objective is listed below:

3.1 To implement weblogs in a classroom

- **Creating a class blog**: The collaboration with the staff of the Computer Centre of the University has enabled a classblog to be created for the purpose of the study. Students were to log in to the site http:wwwblog2 for the duration of the semester to blog their entries. 7-10 entries were to be submitted by the end of the semester. The blog comprises of two columns.One column consists of the space to write the entries and the recent date and time of blooging. Underneath the space is stated the category, the name of the blogger, number of comments and trackbacks. The right column consists of the calendar of the respective month, categories of entry, the topics of recent posting, archives to store data, user list and Search icon. The layout of the blog is as shown below:

25 Apr 2007   04:05:00 am

presenting case study

the first step is to give yourself time to assimilate the case. you have to have deep understanding in the given case to succeed. Then, analyze it thoroughly to look at the development of the organization over time. strategy management tools is useful to get through this task. the next step, you can relate the analysis to the task or question given. the conclusion and recommendation section must be carefully done, have they satisfy all the task or have the answer all the question given.

Category : Entry 1 | Posted By : **faizul** | Comments[0] | Trackbacks [0]

25 Apr 2007   03:59:23 am

job seeking

job seeking strategies is the most interesting part because it taught us a lot about how to research ourself and findout our skills and interest. the main goal is to satisfy yourself for the employment to get as many job interviews as possible. in order to succeed, it require us to have a great deal with planning, initiative, persistenace, hard work, flexibility and good attitude,

this section is the most beneficial for me in the future.

October 2007

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	**23**	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Categories

Entry 1   [153]

Entry 2   [2]

Recent

presenting case study
job seeking
recommendation report
writing at workplace
COMMENT FOR ANAS
PRESENTATIONS
MEETING

Category : <u>Entry 1</u> | Posted By : **faizul** | Comments[0] | Trackbacks [0]

25 Apr 2007   03:53:31 am

recommendation report

recommendation report compares two or more option against the requirements listed and then recommend the best option. recommendation report must be write to accommodate readers need. there are several part in recommendation   report:-
-introduction
-discussion
-recommendation
-conclusion.

purpose, method, scope and definition must be explain in the introduction. discussion can be made by comparing pont to point or contrast format. the rationale section must explain the relationship of the conclusion and to each other.

Category : <u>Entry 1</u> | Posted By : **faizul** | Comments[0] | Trackbacks [0]

25 Apr 2007   03:45:53 am

writing at workplace

good morning,
in the first chapter, we've learn on how to write our own sentence by modifying others. there are three methods to do so. which is;-
-Synthesizing
-executed by combining separate parts or ideas to form a new sentence. it is a strategy of combining
several sentences into one and most effectively used in summarizing.

-Paraphrasing
-to write others report in our own words, we have to use this method. the purpose is to make a sentence
clearer but in the same length as the original. synonyms is th most significant to use in this method.
all points must be included.

-summarizing
-is a process of condensing information without changing the original

meaning. summary is usually
75% shorter, sometimes shorter. summarizing needs the technique of careful reading, and able to
identify the central idea. unnecessary information may be reject in summary.

Category : Entry 1 | Posted By : **faizul** | Comments[0] | Trackbacks [0]

25 Apr 2007   03:42:33 am

COMMENT FOR ANAS

Hi..
So simple your blogging ya...Is it you the boys who wrong the format in this blogging?This is not the frienster boys, this the blog which brings 5% in our course works...What ever it is....Remember that always come to class early ok...Anyway thank you for your co-operations in our group in this class.Good   luck!
bye..

Category : Entry 1 | Posted By : **wahidahza** | Comments[0] | Trackbacks [0]

1 2 3 ...29 30 31 Next

Search

Go

Syndication

RSS 0.90
RSS 2.0

Template theme : aura
Powered by myBloggie 2.1.3 Copyright © 2004 2005
-- myWebland --

- **Lesson Plan** -:

Level: Intermediate and above

Duration: 14 weeks

Aims : The students

1. learn how to write using a blog

2. use the online space for instant online publishing of their written works.

3. read other students' contributions

4. write their responses to peers' written work in the `comments' sections of the weblogs.

5. share individual opinions on published written work in a follow up class discussion.

Resources:

1. webspace

2. access to computer lab once a week.

Procedure:

- Prior to class ,instructor and a staff of the Computer Centre set up the class blog.The username is created for every student.(Appendix A)

- During the internet session,students log onto the weblog and log in their username and key in their password.

- Once the sudent has the blog they will log onto it every week either at the lab or other locations to ascertain the assigned task for the respective week.

- The instructor will assign a task weekly via the blog.The students are responsible to discover the assigned task by blogging.(Appendix B)

- The instructor may give short comments or responses to students' blogs from time to time.

Follow-up stage offline :

This is a class discussion of the experience of blogging and writing activity. Brainstorm learners' feedback on the weblogging activities,difficulties, ,likes,dislikes,needs, future plans,etc.

3.2 To determine students' perception of weblogs

- Questionnaires were distributed to 23 students. Group interviews were conducted at the end of the semester to ascertain students' perception of weblogs as well.

3.3 To discover the advantages and disadvantages of using weblogs.

- The advantages and disadvantages of using weblogs were analyzed based on students' responses in the questionnaires and the interview.

3.4 To enhance students' reflection of what being taught.

- Students were required to reflect on what was taught each week.Thus,this becomes the platform to analyze the students' reflection of the course that is taught. Students' writing were analyzed to ascertain whether the students could effectively reflect the lessons learned in class.

3.5 To develop students' creative and free expressions through writing

- Students' writing were analyzed to ascertain the ways they express their creativity and free expressions.

4.0 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 To implement weblogs in a classroom

Students' view :The challenges faced at the initial stage is to access the site from outside campus.Students face difficulties to access the site whenever they are in their hometown because they can access only when they are within the campus area.Yet, once they access the blog, they enjoy the experience tremendously.

Instructor's view: It is quite difficult to encourage them to blog at the start of semester.Some students took about three or four weeks since the introduction of the weblog to enter the blog. However, at the end of semester,100% submission is noted. Regardless of the frequency of blogging,everyone has submitted all assignments on time.

4.2 To determine students' perception of weblogs

Students' perception on the usage of weblogs are very crucial in order to ensure the objectives of the projects are achieved.

4.2.1 What is a weblog?

Figure 1 illustrates that only 10% knows the existence of weblogs.
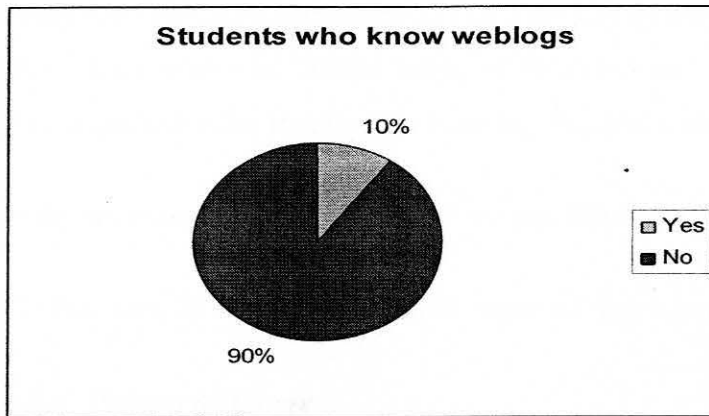
Students who know weblogs

10%

Yes
No

90%

Fig: 1: Students' awareness of weblogs

The interview with them shows that the majority lack the knowledge of weblogs.

X: Have you heard about Blogs?

Y2:Mmmm...they are the online diaries, aren't they? I'm gonna use them when I really know everything about them. At the moment I don't even know how they operate.

Y5: No...idea.

Y10: never heard of that.

Y12: I know web yes....

Y6: I think it is something that we write in the internet,right.

Y7: so everyone can see our writing,right!

4.2.2 *Do you like to use weblogs in the classroom?*

Everyone (100%) of them agreed that they like to use weblogs in their classroom. Even those who said "never heard of them before", agreed that weblogs would play important roles in language learning. Several conversations are as follows:

X: So after you know what they are, do you think we should use them in our class?

Y1: Yes, sure. It's good. we can tell what we learn and what we think.

4.2.3 *Pattern of Usage*

The students were asked about the probability of them using weblogs in term of selection of topics or areas, frequency of entry, monitoring system, virtual and face to face interaction and assessment system.

4.2.3.1 *Selection of topics or areas.*

Figure 2 shows that about 80 % choose to relate the writing to the

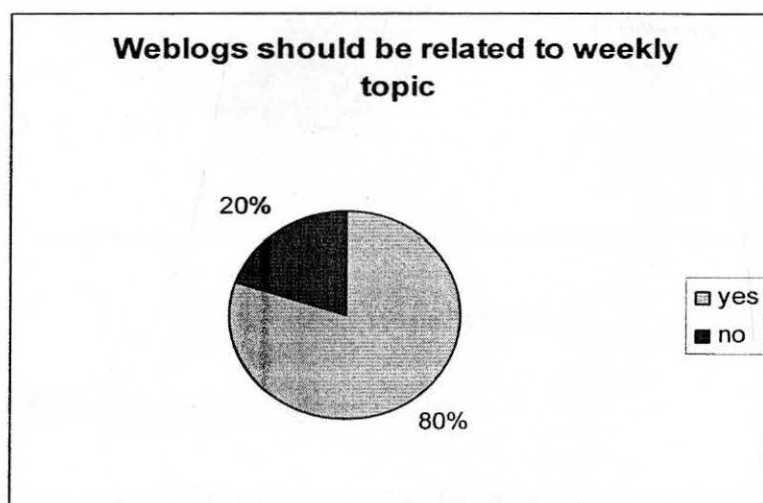topic that they learn each week.

Fig: 2: Students' opinion on the selection of topic.

Yet, a few (20%) feel that they should be given the freedom to write on any topics that they like.

Y1: The topic should be free for us to choose.

Y2: in my view, I prefer to be given the topic for each week.

Y3. I would prefer to write about the topic that we learn that week.

4.2.3.2 Frequency of entry

Figure 3 illustrates that the responses vary from one to another. Some (40%) says they write every week. Another group (20%) states that *"whenever we feel like logging in"*. Another group (20%) expresses that the students have a lot of work to do, thus it is sufficient to write one entry biweekly. 20% of them thinks that *"as long as they write 7-10 entries at the end of the semester that should be fine"*.
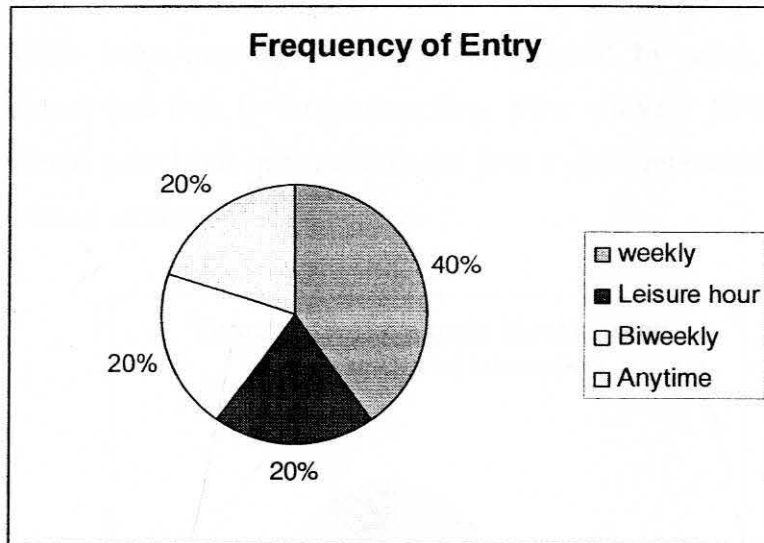

Fig: 3: Students' entries into weblogs

4.2.3.3 Monitoring System

When asked *"Should the instructor monitor the students ' writing?"*, all of them agreed that the students' progress should be monitored. However, this question *'How do we monitor you , then?"* has triggered varied and interesting answers.

Y1: Yes. you make sure that we write each week. If we don't, then you will send a warning so that we remember.

Y2: Yes you mention it in class.

Y3: Don't remind us. how we do it, when we do it will be up to us. But promise 7-10 entries will be there by the end semester.

Y4: But I need also some comments from the instructor. This will motivate me.

Y5: Ask our friends to comment and remind us. Madam will monitor the progress or the comments. This should be interesting.

4.2.3.4 *Virtual and face to face interaction*

Some interesting activities can be designed by using weblogs via virtual and face to face interaction. Most students (89%) agree that virtual goes hand in hand with the face to face interaction. 11% gives various answers as stated below.
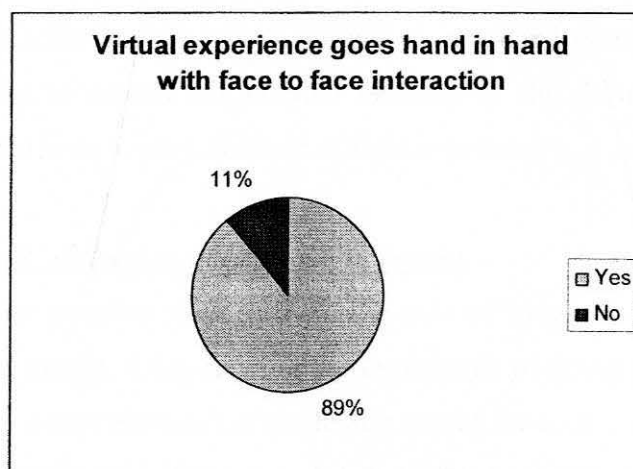

Fig: 4: Students' perceptions on activities

X: What if I choose some of your blogs to be discussed in class?

Y1: yes, I don't mind. At least I know what my weaknesses are.

Y10: Yes, but not my blog. it's terrible.

Y12: It is good but don't take ours. Maybe some other class's.

Y2: I am all for it.

4.3 *The advantages and disadvantages*

The major advantages of weblogging in language classes comprise writing and instant publishing online, awareness of having a web wide readership, individual reading practice, developing critical skills, and creating an e-portfolio of students work.

Y12: In my own blogging it became clear to me at an early point that writing for readers, however few, meant that I took far greater care in my writing than I did when scribbling notes in a notebook for my own eyes only.

Y20:When you blog, you know that others will read what you have written. That means that you write with an awareness of the possibility that others may disagree with what you have written.

Y15: blogging is a good way of practicing writing and expressing your opinions.
Common disadvantages are the forgotten usernames and passwords (this leads to inability to log in and edit one's entries), failure to read and comment on peers' written work, difficulty to access the internet because of the failure of a server, difficulties in finding the time to blog because of tight schedules.

4.4 *To enhance students' reflection of what being taught.*

Most of the blogs show positive responses on the role of blogs in enhancing their refection of what being taught. They recount the experience of doing activities in the tutorial and give a good comprehension of the lesson taught for each week.
Below are some extracts of students' writing that show the students' understanding of the respective lesson.

02 Apr 2007   05:59:23 am

Job Seeking Strategies, Interview..

In Chapter 5, Miss Zanne delivered a lecture about job seeking strategies. Miss Zanne taught us about the technique to produce a good cover letter and resume. Resume should be contained name, contact address, phone number, career objective, educational background, work experience, skills and accomplishments, activities and achievements and reference. In shortly, a resume is aid to employer to know about our strongest qualifications.

We search for a job from job advertisement in local papers. Based on the needs f the company, we have to prepare a cover letter and resume. I apply for the post of Project Engineer in Seapack Food Sdn Bhd. It is quite challenging for me to prepare a cover letter and resume because I haven't do it before. ☺Fortunately, there are some samples for me to refer.

In my opinion, cover letter and resume are important tools in the process of getting a job. We have to convince the employers to interview us through cover letter and resume. In order to make employers consider us for a position in their company, we have to ensure that there is no misspelling, grammatical error and poor writing in our prepared cover letter and resume.

Honestly, I am not prepared well before attending the interview. So nervous! I can't answer properly even I am asked to introduce myself! For me, eye contact is very important during the interview. This is the best way to show our confidence. I promise, I will be well prepared before attending any interview so that my knowledge is not wasted! I will fully use my knowledge of Technical Communication III in future.
Finally, I wish to express gratitude to Wai Fong who was accompanying me in practice of interview. Thanks, my friend!
☺

13 Apr 2007   02:08:49 am

reading and writing at workplace

Hii and heloo this is the blog for reading and writing at workplace

This should be my first blog. The first chapter that we learn for technical communication is reading and writing at workplace. In this chapter we learn three basic elements that usually used in writing, that is synthesizing, paraphrasing and summarizing. Synthesis is a technique to combine separate part of idea to form a complete sentence. Synthesizing often used in summarizing. It is organize in such way that reader can immediately see where the information from the sources overlaps. paraphrasing is using our word to describe someone else's idea. It is different from summary because the word is constructed not quoted. one of the tips to paraphrase is to use synonyms. Finally we learn about summarizing. Basically, summarizing is a process of considering information without changing the original meaning of a passage. The best way to summarize a text or article is to read it several times so we can find the main idea. Summarizing technique involve selection, rejection, and substitution. Reading strategy always relate with summarizing. Reading strategy is a technique of careful reading plan to identify the main point and important supporting detail.

Category : Entry 1 | Posted By : **fadlishah** | Comments[0] | Trackbacks [

04 Apr 2007   02:35:20 am

Worst Interview...!!! Oooppsss... I Did It Again...

An interview is one of the most important events in a person's life. Oh... Is it? Maybe yes, maybe no... 😊

Interview mades me nervouse 😿; interview mades me faint 😿; interview mades me blank... 😊:

It was necessary to dress appropriately for the interview? Yes. It was needed to do so. It gaves a good impression to the interviewer and of course, never be late for the interview. I'll always remember that.

Before the interview, I had:
➔ knew myself, my resume, my position, the meeting place and time!!!
➔ prepared some questions and answers.
➔ rehearsed with my group members.
➔ practiced to smile in front of the interviewer.

During the interview, I think I had:
➔ wished the interviewer before and at the end of the interview session.
➔ showed a good posture and pose. Sit up straight and no slouch in the chair.
➔ made eye-contact with the interviewer.
➔ maintained my unconscious nervouse motion.

After the interview, I'm noticed that I did not had:
➔ good communication skills.
➔ good listening skills.
➔ showed my professionalism.

💡 I'm still remembered the below conversation vividly:
" Ah Bing, you had improved your confidence during these meeting session but not in the interview session."

Anyway, it passes and I had tried my best for both sessions. 😄

cheers,
chocolateboy 😊

Category : <u>Entry 1</u> | Posted By : **voonbing** | <u>Comments</u>[0] | <u>Trackbacks</u> [0]

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24 Apr 2007   09:28:54 am

GRAMMAR!!!!! everybody have to know......

Hello...
Today... is the day for learn grammar in doing the recommendation report... so.
Everybody lets read this... 😊

"modifier"
Definition:
A word, phrase, or clause that functions as an adjective or adverb to limit or qualify the meaning of another word or word group.

Etymology:
From the Latin, "measure."
Examples:
• "Realizing the importance of the case, my men are rounding up twice the usual number of suspects."
(Captain Renault in Casablanca)
• "I'm an excellent housekeeper. Every time I get a divorce, I keep the house."
(Zsa Zsa Gabor)
• "Although we like to think of young children's lives as free of troubles, they are in fact filled with disappointment and frustration."
(Bruno Bettelheim)

"misplaced modifier"
Definition:
Words, phrases, or clauses that do not clearly relate to the word they are intended to modify. See also squinting modifier.
Examples:
• "One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I'll never know."
(Groucho Marx)
• "They just said it's going to rain on the radio."
("Tiger" comic strip)
• "Hugh Jackman donated a pair of jeans to a charity that sold for over $20,000."
• "You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian composers, artists, and writers are buried daily, except on Thursdays."
• "Mr. Clinton acknowledged the role played by the men who subdued the gunman when he spoke at a dinner on Saturday night."
(The New York Times)

Category : Entry 1 | Posted By : **hanizah** | Comments[0] | Trackbacks [0]

5.0 IMPLICATION

The implications of weblogging activity are numerous. First, application of weblogs in Technical Communication classes can be used for raising learners' language awareness and development. Second, weblogging can enhance the students' motivation due to the novelty and diversity of possible learning activities. Third, learning at one's own pace can help learners overcome their fear of making errors and enhance self-esteem. Fourth, weblogging is an enjoyable activity, which attracts the vast majority of students who are keen on having their own website. Fifth, the instructor can provide individual feedback to each learner, and students can receive feedback not only from classmates but also from any Internet reader. Finally, there is an opportunity for learners' reflection on their performance and achievements. In spite of the learners' products in weblogs being not perfect, they show how

students learn and what teachers teach. Orienting learners toward personal publishing on weblogs can help prepare students for communication in the networked world.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the intent of this project was to look into the implementations of weblogs in a technical communication classroom in order to explore the pattern of usage pertaining to selection of topics or areas, frequency of entry, monitoring system, virtual and face to face interaction, to discover the advantages and disadvantages perceived by the students and also to ascertain the role of weblogs in enhancing students' reflections on what being taught in class. The objectives were achieved through questionnaires and detailed interviews among the students of a selected classroom.

The major roles played by Weblogs learning are, as the authentic English language material provider, the tool to improve literacy level through online communication, a means of interaction with native speakers of English and an access to experience creative and free expression through writing. Moreover, it is also noted that weblogs allow students to engage actively in writing that improve motivation for learning without much pressure and anxiety. Weblogs facilitate, encourage and create a conducive environment for the students' acquisition of knowledge.

The study has revealed the positive responses by the students. This, hence, gives an insight into the future use and the future potential of these weblogs. The technological tools of this generation are tremendously effective in enhancing the language course. Technology is not the purpose for offering a course, but it is an excellent enhancement. Thus, instructors must take advantage of this simple medium to enhance the acquisition of language learning.

This investigation did not involve the students in other classes. The authors recommend further studies on this topic to substantiate the data by involving the views of other students who are using weblogs in their classroom. This should serve as the follow up to the present study.

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