

## Multiliteracies in A Writing Class

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### Abstract

Multiliteracies in language teaching can make the process of teaching language easier, more interesting and better. This can include the use of technology in the classroom. To apply multiliteracies in the classroom both students and teachers must be multiliterate.

In writing class, multiliteracies can be applied by using computer and internet in the teaching and learning process. It can be applied in three steps: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. In preparation step the teacher can find sources of teaching material from textbooks and browsing in the internet. Then, he/she can use power points when presenting the teaching material, giving exercises and task. In the last step, evaluation, the teacher gives an assignment and the students should submit their work via email to the teacher. The teacher then gives some feedback using computer (comment bar) and send it back to the students. The students must revise the work based on the teacher's feedback and send again to the teacher. This way of teaching is more interesting for the students, more efficient and therefore can give better result in learning.

Key words: multiliteracies, writing

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### A. Introduction

Technology is part of our daily life now. We cannot spend a day without contact with technology. Technology affects and plays important roles in all aspects of life, education is no exception. The activities in teaching and learning process too, are affected by technology. Generally the use of technology makes things done more easily, efficiently, and pleasantly. The teacher can get help from the internet.

In education field, technology has shown its influence. It has made education develop fast. Teachers and students can access knowledge and information easily and abundantly. We may find lots of references just by clicking in seconds. Dudeney (2001:1) states, " ... internet can be an infinite resource file of texts, visual stimuli, listening material, vocabulary, information, video files, live TV and radio, newspapers from around the world..... The list is endless."

In the classroom too, technology has changed the way students learn and teachers teach. It is not a common sight anymore to find teachers writing on the board and students take some notes. LCD is now available and teachers can just turn it on, use power points presenting the materials in interesting slides, show audio visual activities, and other interesting materials that will be learnt by the students in a joyful class.

Technology has enabled multiliteracy to be applied in the teaching and learning process. The

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use of technology opens the door for different kinds of literacy to be integrated in the teaching and learning activity.

The aim of this article is to share ideas on how to apply multiliteracies in writing class. The discussion will include preparation, implementation, and evaluation steps.

## **B. Multiliteracy**

Hornby's dictionary defines literate as able to read and write; literacy as ability to read and write. But now, the meaning of literate and literacy has changed. Literate and literacy do not only mean being able or having ability to read and write. Literate and literacy have broader meaning. Terms such as technologically,

culturally, and digitally literate or information, electronic, and digital literacy are not strange anymore. Therefore, literate and literacy are not limited only to read and write.

Paul Gilster as quoted by Phillip A Towndrow (2004:152) defines digital literacy as "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers". This definition helps us define the literacy that it is the ability to understand and use information from the sources. When it is multiliteracy, then it is the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from multiple sources. The New London Group considers multiliteracy as a new method to teaching literacy. In this method the teaching of literacy uses visual text, sounds, computers, internets, etc. (Denges: 2009). Meanwhile, Gentle et al as quoted by Adwell states, "Multiliteracy is a schema in which understanding all types of texts and textual connections--audio, visual, print, etc.--are types of literacy and necessary for communication and participation in a global world. The multiliteracy approach focuses on an education that is multimodal, meaning that it incorporates aspects of design that are linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural. "

## **C. Teaching Writing**

It is said that writing is the most difficult language skill, even for the native language users. This is true because to be able to produce a piece of writing, integrated skills are needed. The skills comprise grammar, generating ideas (content), organizing ideas (organization), and using mechanics.

Many students get difficulty in writing because it is difficult for them to master and integrate the micro skills. Some students may have good ideas and can organize their ideas well, but the grammar and words they use are not correct. On the other hand, some other students have good grammar and master the vocabulary well, but cannot organize their ideas. As a result, the product of their writing is not good.

That condition in writing class becomes problems for the teacher. Teachers of writing have to find ways to overcome the problems. However, finding solution for such problems is not easy. What the teacher can do is maximizing their roles. Harmer (2001:261-2) explains that the roles of the teacher in writing class are motivator, resource, and feedback provider.

## **D. Implementing multiliteracies in a writing class**

The implementation of multiliteracies in a writing class requires the students and the teacher as well to be able to understand and use visual/written text, audio visual, computer, and internet. The computer and the access to the internet are available at our campus. Most students also have their own laptop and every student can access the internet as *wifi* is available. Students are technologically literate, so there are no problems with the understanding and use of computer and internet. Multiliteracies in writing class can be implemented as illustrated below.

## 1. Preparation Step

In this step the role of the teacher as resource is dominant. The teacher can maximize the role as resource by preparing the rich and best material and how to present it to the students. This can be divided into 2 parts.

### a. Explanation

The teacher must provide information that the students need in writing. The teacher must explain the material as clearly as possible to equip students with knowledge so that they are ready to write. Therefore, in this step the teacher will deal more with writing theory and exercises. The teacher can find the source from textbook or internet, then use power point presentation using computer and LCD. This will make efficient and effective explanation for all the students will focus their attention on the display. The teacher must be skillfull in designing the power point presentation and operating it when it is displayed using LCD.

### b. Choosing activities

Another thing that the teacher should do is preparing what the students will do to apply the multiliteracies. Therefore, the teacher should prepare activities that will involve students in using several sources and format in writing. The teacher can choose among others:

- Magazine/newspaper: as reference or source of ideas before writing. The teacher can select articles from printed material or browsing in the internet. The students must read it first and finally write an article as instructed by the tacher.
- Film: the teacher must select film that is related to the type of text the students will write. The teacher needs to find and choose the film first before asking the student to down load from the internet. The students should watch it before writing. What they watch will be the source of material for writing.
- Data collection: the teacher asks the students to find data by searching documents, interviewing and other techniques. The source of data can be printed material, interview, and of course data from internet.

## 2. Implementation Step

The implementation step is the practice step. The students will practice writing as instructed by the teacher. It can be writing a description, argumentation, comparison and contrast, and other types of writing text. The teacher must select activities that are suitable with the type of text the students will write.

Examples of activities:

- a. Task : writing descriptive text  
Media: film (Freedom Writers), internet, computer
1. The teacher informs the students that they are going to write a descriptive article. They have to describe the characteristics of a good teacher. The content of the article must be based on the film suggested by the teacher, therefore they have to watch the film first. The film is about the struggle of a new teacher in coping with the hard problems in the teaching and learning process. The teacher is successful in managing the class and the students because of her characteristics that represent a good teacher.
  2. The teacher tells the students they are to find the film- Freedom Writers in you tube in the internet.
  3. The students watch the film and then make an outline in the power point presentation.
  4. The students present the outline in front of the class using LCD. It is done to get the feedback from peers and the teacher.
  5. Based on the outline that has been revised based on the feedback (if any), the students write the article.
  6. The students send their descriptive text to the teacher via email.
- b. Task : writing argumentation  
Media: Newspaper (The Jakarta Post)

The step used here is similar to the first example. The teacher will start by informing the students that they are going to write an argumentation. The teacher gives a title of an article from Jakarta Post and asks the students to find it by searching in the internet. The teacher should choose an article that will stimulate the students to show the pros or cons. The students have to read it and make an outline of their argumentation about the topic. The outline will be displayed to get feedback. The students need to be literate with LCD presentation. The next activity is writing the article based on the revised outline and sending the work via email to the teacher.

The two examples of activity above show that multiliteracies are applied in the learning process. To do the main activity, writing, the students must read, watch film, browse, search in the internet, write and send email.

In this step, it is important for the teacher to play the role as motivator. The teacher must make the students confident that they can do what the teacher asks. Make the students sure that making mistake is natural in the learning process and therefore no need to be afraid of making mistakes. The teacher can also encourage the students to help each other especially when there is difficulty with the use of computer or internet.

c. Evaluation Step

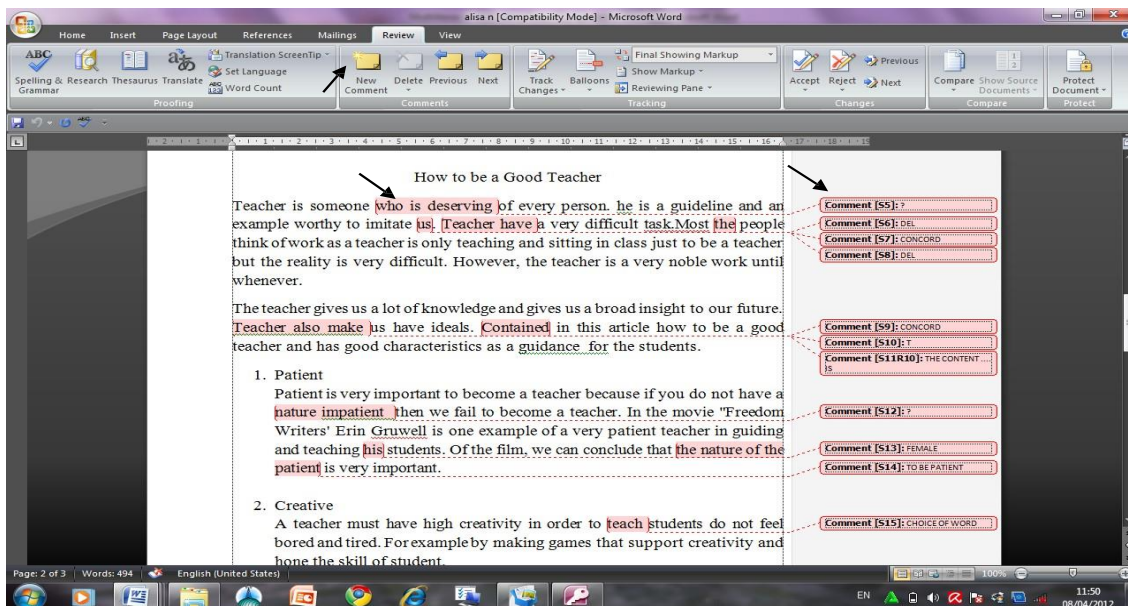
In evaluation step the teacher must evaluate the students' work. The aim here is to check the students' ability in writing and to give feedback. So, the teacher's role as feedback provider should be maximize. The teacher should give helpful feedback in order that the students can improve their writing. To start the evaluation, the teacher must first download the work from the internet. Then, the work is evaluated by giving comment. The evaluation is done by using computer. It is done in the following steps.

1. Download the students' work. Use the MS Word. Click the **Review** bar, and find the **New Comment**. Give sign to the part that will be given comment by making block on it. The next step is click the **New Comment** and a place to write the comment will appear on the right side. The teacher then can write the comment in that box. The teacher can write the comment that may include format, mechanics, content and organization, grammar and sentence structure as the rubric designed by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue (2006: 316) or other rubrics that represent the elements needed in writing. When there is a mistake and the comment must be changed in other place, just click the **Delete** next to the **New Comment** and click again the **New Comment**.
2. When the teacher finishes writing all comments, the next step is to send the commented work to the students through email. The students have to revise their work based on the feedback given by the teacher and send the revised one to the teacher via email. The comment given to the students' work will clearly show in which part of the work the students still make mistake.

This way of evaluating may give the teacher extra work for downloading several files takes time and it can be tiring. This is just an alternative way of evaluating in a multiliteracy approach. The teacher can find other ways of evaluating that also apply multiliteracies.

The following are examples of students' work and the comment given by the teacher.

a. Argumentation



b. Description

The three steps above show the use of multiliteracies in a writing class. The students as well as the teacher use several media and sources to develop the students' writing ability. They include sound, visual, written text, reading, listening, and of course computer and internet before finally produce a piece of writing.

### **Conclusion**

To be multiliterate will make learning faster, easier, and more interesting. Most students are now multiliterate. They understand and can use several media. Furthermore, media are available and can be accessed easily. This is very beneficial for teaching and learning practice, including teaching and learning writing.

The English teacher needs to be multiliterate and creative so that the writing class will run effectively and interestingly. The teacher and the students can use power point presentation, LCD, download video, browse, use computer and internet, and other digital or electronic sources to make the learners' writing ability good.

The implementation of multiteracy in writing class can be done in all steps of teaching and learning process : preparation, implementation, and evaluation. What the teacher needs to do is to be creative in choosing and using the media literacy so that it will help the students achieve the best result in learning writing. When it is done, it will make the students learn in various ways. It gives the students more interesting activities and more learning experiences. This will increase the students' motivation so that the learning result will be better.

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