T. Hirashima et al. (Eds.) (2011). Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Computers in Education. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Asia-Pacific Society for Computers in Education

A Web2.0 High Interactive Platform for Composition Teaching

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Abstract: This paper presents an ongoing project developing a Web2.0 platform which provides a real-classroom-like environment for composition teaching. The platform is designed based on annotation technology to comply with the needs for high interactive, for increasing the use of figure and picture for discussion, and intuitive operating interface. Users' behavior is also to be observed and recorded for further analysis.

Keywords: Web2.0 platform, composition teaching, annotation

Introduction

Writing ability is a kernel learning subject of Mandarin courses in Taiwan. Many teachers adopt the presentation mode of four instruction modes identified by Hillocks to proceed composition teaching activity [4]. Hillocks found that the environmental mode was the most effective one for raising the quality of student writing [4]. He also found that the practice of building more complex sentence is effective. In the environmental mode, small group problem-centered learning activities lead to high interaction among students and high level of student involvement. In era of Web2.0, technologies that can be used for education applications over network have been developed. Soumplis et al., tabulated technologies used by 43 e-learning platforms [5]. Where Wiki provides high interactive allowing users modify, remix, combine other's articles and generate new matters. Blog, Forum and Conference provide a channel for sharing information or for discussion. All the technologies stress interaction among learners.

Alexander et al, suggested Web2.0 storytelling for composition platform in creative writing class [1]. Frossand et al, disclosed a new learning scenario to facilitate language learning and writing skill in Span, which is called "collaborative storytelling with Wiki" involving several distant schools in co-writing a story [3].

Teacher who teaches composition course in Taiwan has to face 20 to 30 students in his/her classroom. There is no enough time for teaching activities such as group learning activity, sentence combining training, and face to face teaching. Remedial teaching via network is an alternative option to raise student writing ability. Although using ready available platforms for storytelling is a good way to practice writing, there are still inadequate for composition teaching. Consider the situation when members of a group discuss a specific topic. After member A expressed his/her opinions, member B is agree with most of his/her point of view except for one point. B will express his/her own view on the specific point only. If the discussion is made on the current Web2.0 platform, B may

have to quotes what A had said to make sure every member knows with which point he/she concerns. The same situation comes out while teacher wants to modify or makes suggestions on some sentences of student's article. The platform is lack of an efficient and simple way to mark the specific question issue. Another scenario comes from discussing on a specific area of a picture or a graph. It is a difficult to make sure if every member focus on the area while discussing on line over internet.

In the last decade, annotation technology has been applied to education field. The advantage of annotation is that user can markup words, or sentences in an article without ambiguous. The markup operation is more efficient than quoting contents of article. The authors' previous work has developed an annotation-based on line collaborative learning platform with text and figure (or picture) annotation functions [2]. The platform, with its revised version, would provide solution to the aforementioned requirements, and facilitate on line composition teaching.

In this paper, an ongoing composition teaching project is presented. The objects of the project are as follows:

- Develop a Web2.0 platform for composition teaching. The platform provides a real-classroom-like environment.
- Observe and analysis the collaborative activities on the platform.
- Assess the effectiveness of raising writing ability after learning activities on the platform.

1. Platform That Comply With Needs of Composition Teaching

1.1 Activities in the Classroom

The environmental mode will be used in the project. "environmental mode is characterized by (1) clear and specific objectives, such as to increase the use of specific detail and figurative language: (2) materials and problems selected to engage students with each other in specifiable processes important to some particular aspect of writing: and (3) activities, such as small group problem-centered discussions, conductive to high levels of peer interaction concerning specific tasks. [4]" According to the three needs, the platform is designed and developed.

1.2 The Platform

The platform allows uploading of picture, graph, image, and audio file as well as text. Teacher can easily organize courseware for each group via a WYSIWY (What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get) interface. He/She may also annotate texts or a specific area on picture, make a new topic and ask students to comment. Students login with an assigned group account, and start discussion by a forum-style process except that they can markup and annotate either texts or picture to make a comment in a pup-up editor form. Others can click the annotated text or area on the picture to read the comment, and annotate the comment for further discussion. The high interactive platform provides a real-classroom like environment and an efficient way to comply with the needs of composition teaching on the Web. All activities are recorded in a log file.

2. Course Activities

2.1 Activities

At the end of the experimental course, students are asked to complete an article titled "One Day Tour along Taipei MRT." The researcher first upload a map of Taipei MRT, and ask students choice part of stations they are interesting in to organize the tour and introduce the details to the public. The student should collect touring information around these stations. Then they would start discussion over the network with group members. During the process, they may upload the collected information to the platform. Finally, they will complete the article collaboratively on the platform.

2.2 Observation and Analysis

All the contents of discussion are saved as webpages. The researchers observe/peer the process during the whole experiment. Questionnaire is also conducted at the end of the course. Log file analysis as well as the operating experience feedback from students will be the reference for improvement.

3. Conclusions

Writing ability is an important object of Mandarin course. However, there are other topics share the course time. Thus, many teachers adopt presentational instruction mode in their class. The effectiveness in raising writing ability by presentational mode is not satisfactory as Hllocks found [4]. Applying new technology could assist teacher move his/her teaching activities from classroom to internet. Teacher plays minimum role in the environmental instruction mode, so additional teaching load will not significant increase.

Acknowledgements

The work has been funded under grant number NSC 100-2511-S-152-011-MY2 and NSC 100-2511-S-152-003 by the National Science Council, R.O.C.

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