

The development of the Writing Portal (TWP) to Support ESL pre-service teachers' writing needs

Abstract

This study reports on the 'developmental' phase of an initiative to develop and evaluate a prototype E-learning portal, known as The Writing Portal (TWP) to support the writing needs of English as a Second Language (ESL) pre-service teachers in an institute of teacher education in Malaysia. The portal aspires to complement the five stages of the writing process that students have to embark on in accomplishing their written coursework. The web portal contains categorized links to evaluated ESL resources useful for ESL writing process, and integrates web 2.0 tools such as blogs (as writing database for learners), discussion board, live chat, bulletin boards and vote polls. The design is based on results from the analysis phase conducted earlier on learners' attitudes and preferences, and analysis of content and context. It is also inspired to optimize the benefits that each technological tool could offer. To develop the web portal, an open source web development tool Joomla! 2.5 is used on Windows platform, and all features of the web portal are developed by installing non-commercial plug-in modules available on Joomla! website. All participants are given passwords to gain access to the portal where they are provided with writing tasks to experience and test the usability and functionality of the portal in relation to their writing task.