MUSIC VIDEO CLIP STORYBOARD WRITING AMONG FOCUS GROUP LEARNERS OF MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

A storyboard is simply a sequence of drawings, similar to a comic book, which represents the sequence of shots in the finished screen work. It is essentially a timeline going from top to bottom, with the top occurring first. Hence, a storyboard is also an expression of everything or even a rough sketch that will be contained in the program telling where the menu screens in a computer interface will look like, what pictures either still or moving will be seen when and for how long, what audio and text will accompany the images, either synchronously or hyperlinked or in other words allows us to see what the scene will look like. On the other hand, the storyboard expresses, in one way or another, everything that can be seen or heard or experienced by the end-user of the multimedia program. Therefore, this paper investigates the communication occurred during storyboard writing for the music video clip. Five pairs of subjects were involved in this study. A task was given to each pair and the length of time for them to discuss about the layout and the content of the storyboard was 3 hours for each pair in five weeks. The discussion will be taped and analyzed accordingly. The subjects were learners involved in a media course ages between 16-18 years old at one of the colleges in Nottingham, six female and four male. The subjects had no experience in storyboard writing. They were to write the storyboard for a music video clip. This paper uses the ethnography communication theory by Hymes (1962) to analyze the conversations.

Keywords: Storyboard, Communication, Setting, Media

INTRODUCTION

Storyboards are graphic organizers such as a series of illustrations or images displayed in sequence for the purpose of pre-visualizing a motion picture, animation, motion graphic or interactive media sequence, including website interactivity (Wikipedia, 2010). A storyboard is the documentation for interactive multimedia production (Sova and Sova, 2006). It contains instructions for programming, an audio script, and a detailed description of the visual elements such as text, video, graphics, and animation. The storyboard becomes the key design document that the entire production team uses as a base for developing the interactive program (Orr, Golas & Yao, 1993). Using storyboard allows the author to depict what he or she had in mind for the content in a manner that is very systematic and easily understood by the multimedia developer. Storyboards are also the cheaper alternative to visualise the content prior to production. Storyboards are a tool used commonly in video production, animation, web site design and video game design. It allows for members of a team to understand the various parts of the production. During the design stage a storyboard makes it easy to rearrange scenes, change descriptions and modify, add or delete parts while creating the complete story (Andrew, 2009).

According to Andrew (2009) the design and planning for the course outline for teenage learners would be different compared to the design and course outline for the younger generations. Teenage learners need different approach as they needed more time to understand and remember the content of the lesson. The time span for them to concentrate in a lecture is far less compared to the younger ones. Therefore, learners need different approach

and far more interesting. One way of approach is by using the storyboard in learning. Story-boarding is a popular management tool to facilitate the creative-thinking process and can be likened to taking your thoughts and the thoughts of others and spreading them out on a wall as you work on a project or solve a problem (Wan Adli Ridzwan Wan Hassan, 2007). A storyboard helps to plan for instruction and draw out in detail all the elements. It also helps to communicate with others about any ideas. Klaus (2002), postulates that a storyboard is a plan for teaching and learning activities. It can be a combination of outlines and visual sketches (e.g., flowcharts) that map out the contents or sequence of ideas. Orr, Golas and Yao (1993) state that storyboards take many different forms and a simple storyboard may be a flowchart, a table, an outline while a more complicated storyboard for multimedia development may include a detailed description of the visual elements such as text, graphics, video and animation. Accordingly, it will also include the sequence and what will occur simultaneously. Klaus (2002) adds that storyboard helps a person to think ahead about what the instruction is going to look like when it is completed, what the students need to do in order to learn, and what the faculty will do during the course. Apparently, storyboard also helps a person to create the direction (flow), the structure and sequence for the instruction. Subsequently, academicians will find that teaching goes more smoothly and is less stressful and demanding and each lesson will fit into the course plan (Klaus, 2002). Storyboard writing is actually under the category of technology education and it is clearly hands-on. It is a form of technology and it illustrates certain mechanical principles and Barlow (1967) states that this would make his students construct models out of wood. Here, this hands-on experience demonstrated a practical use for various hands-on precepts. According to Bruner (1966: 41) a supporter of varied learning experiences, states that the manipulability of a body of knowledge creates both a physical and mental optimum learning structure and contended

tended that physical operations create feed-back of learning that allow learners to see it happen. Martinez (1985) agrees and claims by saying that a student who is introduced to a concept will grasp a different meaning than a student who actually uses and experience its properties firsthand.

Wan Adli Ridwan Wan Hassan (2007) findings based on the targeted user group, the instructional design principles that have been identified for the study is Gagne's Nine Learning Events (Gagne, Briggs and Wager, 1992).   The study was accomplished by interviewing with industrial practitioner and the data was used to get the initial functional requirements of the application. The data gathered was then used to identify the data entities and hence the design of the application. According to Wan Adli Ridzwan Wan Hassan (2007) the final version of the application was then tested by the interviewed practitioner to ensure the requirements were successfully translated into the application. After which, a quantitative measure via questionnaires was used to determine the effectiveness of the developed application. The application was given to a group of 18 industrial practitioners to be tried out in their working environment. Another research was carried out by Yap Chui Yan and Nor Ashikin Abdul Aziz (2005) entitled Lights, Camera and Action!. The research was to investigate the importance of storyboard writing before a production took place. Here, they concentrated on the drama and film making. The findings showed that with a proper storyboard, a video production would be simpler since the storyboard was a reference according to the storyline. Another research by Normaliza Abd Rahim et al., (2009) which involved ten subjects from the Language in Multimedia course aged between 33-40 years old. The subjects worked in pairs and were given a three-hour session to finish their storyboard

writing. The findings of the study stated that all pairs were seen doing a good job in the storyboard writing. The process went really well and the interaction between all pairs showed that they were committed. The findings showed that with the use of storyboard, subjects were able to comprehend well with the task given.

Hence, with the above previous research, this study investigates the importance of storyboard writing in a music video clip production. As such, the subjects involved would therefore expose to the use of the storyboard in the classroom. This paper consists of two research questions. What are the contents of communication among the subjects while writing the storyboard for the music video clip production? What are the meanings of the subjects' discussion by using the ethnography communication model? Therefore, the objectives of this paper were to investigate the contents of communication among the subjects while writing the storyboard for the music video clip production and to discuss the content of communication while writing the storyboard for a music video clip production.

METHODOLOGY

Ten subjects from the media course at The Nottingham Bluecoat College, United Kingdom participated in this study. The subjects ages between 16-18 years old, six female and four male (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9 and S10). The subjects will be working in pairs (S1 with S2, S3 with S4, S5 with S6, S7 with S8 and S9 with S10) and were given five weeks and a three-hour for each session to finish their storyboard writing. The subjects were to write the storyboard according to the storyline in the lyrics of the song given to them. A template of

storyboard (see table 1) will be given to the pairs. They were allowed to browse the internet for information for the content of the storyboard. All pairs will be working in the computer lab and the researcher will act as a facilitator. The subjects were taught on how to write the storyboard in their previous lessons. Their discussions were recorded concurrently. Extracts from the conversation were selected based on the purpose of the study. The findings were analyzed in five parts, the storyboard, setting, description, props and lastly the video.

Therefore, this paper utilizes the ethnography communication model by Hymes (1962) where speech and human relation take place and to assist the identification and labeling of components of linguistic interaction. According to Hymes (1962) in order to speak a language correctly, one needs not only to learn its vocabulary and grammar, but also the context in which words are used.

Table 1: Sample of storyboard template

No	Setting	Song lyrics	Description	Actors	Props	Shot

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Storyboard

The subjects were in pairs to work on the storyboard. They were given two weeks to write the storyboard. The layout of the storyboard was given to the subjects and they were to fill in the boxes provided. In the beginning, the subjects were very quiet as they were trying to

understand on the storyboard writing since this was the first time that they had written. In the beginning, they were given the lyrics of the song and with the lyrics they had to make sure that the storyline in the storyboard reflected the lyrics of the song. Questions like, 'S1: Do you think the song is about love between siblings?', 'S4: Is it about mother's love?', 'S5: What about this one here, this is about love, right?', and 'S8: Which part is it?'. The pairs were giving opinions to each other and this activity was carried on until they were happy with the storyboard. Opinions like, 'S2: The script here is not related to the lyrics of the song!', 'S3: Shall we put the conversation for the girl here, instead of the next one!', 'S6: The script for the boy is too short since the lyrics for this one is much longer!', 'S7: I would rather have this dialogue here!', 'S9: I think this is perfect, we can put the storyline over here at the next stanza of the lyrics' and 'S10: I thought there is not much dialogue in a song! Shall we just let the actors mime!'. The pairs seemed to be imagining the storyline that they created based on the lyrics of the song. They had to make sure that there would not be any dialogue since this was the video clip but it seemed that one pair (S9 and S10) had decided that there will be a short dialogue without the music. They felt that the dialogue would make the storyline even more exciting. It was really amazed to see the subjects' creativity when it was actually the first time for all of them to write a storyboard for a music video. They seemed to be very enthusiastic to match the music with their storyline for the video.

The Setting

The subjects were seen discussing on the setting for the video clip. They were seen looking at places of interest in the area via the internet. They were also discussing on scouting the area

the following weekend. They were giving suggestions of the setting like, 'S1: Since this is about the girl working, why not we have it in the city centre!', 'S4: Shall we have one shot at the Forest Field for both brother and sister would run and play football or roller blade', 'S5: For this stanza here, we can have it at Sherwood Forest, since they were supposed to be walking together in the weekend!', ' S8: What about my house for this part here? We can have a shot in the kitchen!' and 'S10: What about your backyard. It has really nice garden!'.

They were happy with the suggestion and listed all the suggestion in the storyboard. They were having tentative settings as they felt that having two or more suggestion would make it more interesting. For instance, they were suggesting a few houses for the kitchen scene since they might not get the permission from their parents so they had to make several plans in order to make it worth going. As a matter of fact, they were suggesting a few houses like their uncles or auntie's houses. One pairs seemed to be very confident (S9 and S10) where they already sought permission from their parents. They had full support from their parents where according to the pair, they were so excited about the project and they already mentioned it to their parents. They seemed to be very happy. The other pairs were giving opinions on the setting far from home and had written on the storyboard like, 'S2: What about in Loughborough? There is a Manor Farm there!', 'S3: Sherwood Forest is suitable for this stanza', 'S6: Shall we go to Leicester this weekend with my mum for the horse riding scene!', 'S7: My auntie has a farm at Warwick! Shall we stay there over the weekend! I will call her today!', and 'S9: York is a ghost town, shall we do it there since this stanza needs to have both the brother and sister together went outing!'. It was really amazed to have suggestion for the setting since they had great ideas for the video. They seemed to be enjoying the process of

the storyboard writing where they were imagining the places that they suggested. All the subjects settled with the setting of the scenes within the time frame.

The Description

The subjects were given another weeks for this task. They have to describe what they actors or actress had to do according to the storyline and the song lyrics. This part was a bit tedious as there would be a large number of scenes. Each scene should be taken three times in different angles and shot. Therefore, each pair had to be very careful in terms of writing the storyboard. The subjects were seen involved seriously in this task and they were seen commenting on each other like, 'S1: You should have written the beginning part first!', 'S3: There should be two characters in this stanza so we have to write about both characters!', 'S5: I have written 'boil water' here. It is right after the girl in the kitchen scene!', 'S7: Shall we just write 'S10: Make two mugs of tea' here!' and 'S9: The boy is looking at his thumb like an artist! I will write it here, okay!'. The description written by all the subjects were clear and simple and these descriptions would not make the actor or actress confused with the instruction. The description part was also very important for the director since there was a storyline for the music video. Also, the descriptions in the storyboards were short and brief and most importantly simple and easy to understand. The descriptions were like, 'S2: Calling Alim to come down!', 'S3: John is smiling at Jasper', 'S5: Catherine is busy wiping this hands with the wipes from his bag', 'S7: Jamie runs towards the walking path', 'S8: Arranging the glasses and toothbrushes', 'S9: Tidying up his room' and 'S10: Cleaning the sink'. The description above showed that the subjects understood the style of writing for the description in the storyboard. At times, the subjects were seen quiet since they were busy

concentrating on writing the storyboard. The writing of the storyboard needed them to imagine the storyline and therefore they had to be focused all the time.

The Props

The subjects were also informed to insert the props for the video. The props should be liaised with the storyline and the setting of the video. The subjects had to make sure that the props were suitable and not costly. They were reminded by the researcher that the materials should also be authentic and looked real for the story. There were a number of choices in the selection of the props. There were also suggestions like, 'S2: We need a bread toaster!', 'S3: The kitchen utensils should be ready and I think I can ask from my mum!', 'S6: I will borrow the electronic gadget from my brother at home!', ' S7: Shall we buy fruits for this part here!', 'S9: We can use my bag pack for the boy here!', and 'S10: Use my jacket for the boy since it is brown!'. The subjects were compromising with one another on the choice of the props. They were trying their best to use authentic materials and at the same time try to avoid buying new things. They had written the props list and at the same time, they wrote the second option for the props to make sure that if the first choice could not be found, they would go for the second choice. They were well prepared and contented with the choices of the props. There were also questions raised by the subjects to their partner for assurance. For instance, 'S1: Where can we get the first aid kit?', 'S4: Shall we just use the baby wipes for this part?', 'S6: Can we just use my mobile phone for the girl to use?', 'S8: Who is making the sandwiches?', 'S9: What types of fruits do we need to buy?' and 'S10: Shall we just use the biscuits from home rather than buy new ones?'. The subjects answered the questions and towards the end of the discussion, they managed to finish the props part of the storyboard.

This showed that the questions by their peers were helpful in terms of preparation of the props.

The Video

The subjects discussed on the types of shot for the video. The types of shot were based on the storyboard and the explanation in the description. It also depended on the importance of the shot in accordance to the storyline in the storyboard. The subjects ought to make sure that the lyrics of the songs coincided with the types of shot that they had chosen. Suggestions from the subjects were heard like, 'S1: Shall we use the long shot for the introduction of the video!', 'S3: We have to climb on a ladder to get the bird's eye view shot but it will be still!', 'S5: We have to move slowly here where the shot would be moving from here to here!', 'S7: Close-up would be appropriate here!', and 'S9: For this scene, we must have at least three different shots from three different angles!'. The subjects were introduced to different kinds of shot before the project started. They were shown a number of shots in order for them to understand the types of shots for the video. In fact, they were given notes on the different types of shots. The subjects found that the different types of shot had helped them in choosing the right shot for the video. They also found that the variety of the shots would make the video more interesting. The subjects were seen referring to the notes given to them and at times they asked the researcher on the types of shots that were suitable for their storyboard. They were focused and some of them were even pretended to be the cameraman and started with the shot. They mentioned, 'S2: What do you think if I am the cameraman here and use this type of shot!', 'S4: What about standing on the table to get the shot near the door?', 'S6: Shall we just the tripod for this shot?', 'S8: This shot might look a bit dark!',

'S10: You have to find a white polystyrene to make the faces brighter here!'. The subjects even had the thought of getting the polystyrene to ensure that the shot would be bright enough at the angle according to the storyboard. On the other hand, the subjects were able to use different types of shots for their video.

Summary of the Findings

According to the findings, all subjects were focused on the storyboard writing. They were also involved in the entire task given to them. They were seen discussing on the storyboard writing, setting, description, props and video with the partners. All pairs managed to finish writing the storyboard within the time frame. They showed great interest towards the storyboard writing. In fact, they were interested to do the video clip since they asked the researcher's permission to join with the team for the video. They also volunteered to be the actors for the video and this showed the enthusiasm in the subjects. Although all subjects S1. S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7 and S8 showed great interest towards storyboard writing for the music video clip but subjects S9 and S10 were obviously shown their high enthusiasm compared to the rest. S9 and S10 were contented with the storyboard and the descriptions in their storyboard were complete and the explanations were brief and concise. They even drew sketches of the actors to ensure the director or the actors were able to understand the position when the videotaping took place.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the music video clip storyboard writing among focus group learners of media were able to increase students' confidence in learning. The subjects were happy and focused on the storyboard writing and on the other hand, the subjects had shown great interest towards the task given to them. The findings of Normaliza Abd Rahim et al. (2009) were similar to this study where storyboard writing was focused and able to enhance students learning. Wan Adli Ridzwan Wan Hassan (2007) and Yap Chui Yan and Nor Ashikin Abdul Aziz (2005) findings were similar with this study where storyboard writing was an important factor in a successful preparation towards an outcome for a new technology such as the websites or drama and film making. Hence, this study resulted an interesting lesson which was different than the normal classroom environment. The students were able to give opinions and the discussion with their peers has helped them to produce a quality product. Therefore, it would be recommended to educators, administrators and syllabus designers to include storyboard writing as an activity for teenagers and at the same time actively participate in the activity.

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Normaliza Abd Rahim is currently the coordinator for the Translation and Interpretation courses and a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Due to her keen interest in language and media technology, and her wide experience in teaching the language technology courses, she was appointed as the consultant of curriculum development for private universities and colleges in several states in Malaysia. As such, she provides assistance in developing activities to enhance learning by using the computer. Thus, her interest in media technology continues whereby during her sabbatical, she wrote her own song and a video clip was completed. She managed to have the shooting of the video clip throughout Ireland, United Kingdom, Italy and Belgium.