

THE USE OF FACEBOOK AND DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS

Ni Made Anggi ArlinaPutri

nimadeanggi@gmail.com

Abstract. This qualitative study investigates the extent to which Facebook supports EFL teaching and learning, potential and challenges of using Facebook on English writing subject, and teacher and students' responses toward Facebook implementation. Conducted at a junior high school in Surakarta, this study involved one EFL teacher and five students as participants. Data from classroom observation, interview, and documentation suggest that the use of Facebook as a technology-based media in English writing classroom enhances the discussion and participation in teaching-learning activities. After a class discussion on Facebook facilitated by the teacher has allowed the student to visit the Facebook and to have a group discussion. The social media has provided students with a better learning process through a variety of multi-media resources which enhance autonomous learning strategies and improves their achievement of English writing.

Keywords: Blended Learning Process, Writing, 21st Teaching Learning, Challenges, Facebook

INTRODUCTION

The students shared the characteristics of being unreflective, lacking motivation, being surface the learners and unengaged with the learning process on their first-year experience (Pfeiffer et al. 2003; Holley, Andrew, and Pheiffer, 2004). Elton (1988) suggests that student learning falls into three main dimensions of study strategy: personal meaning, reproducing and achieving. Haggis (2004, 182) indicates that there is the 'need to look again at what is understood by learning (and, indeed non-learning) in this context.' He also states that not all students can be made to interact with their subject both personally and meaningfully in the classroom. So, it suggests to students' orientation, however, has been linked directly by many to transformative technologies and their potentials. For example, the potential for distributed a recess to instructional materials, interactive simulations, and "friendly" hyper-textual information display have made the internet seem an ideal environment for student-centered active learning.

Realizing how complex writing is, the researchers offer Facebook in teaching writing in the blended learning process. As the media, Facebook enhanced the students and teacher in a discussion group after the class. Then It is expected to give new perception for the teacher about the role and meaning of active learning especially in writing to deal with its complexity and to fulfill the demand of this 21st teaching-learning challenge. In the Indonesian context,

unfortunately, Facebook has not been familiar in supporting the classroom learning process because it is well known as a social network since 2005. Consequently, it also influences the lack of research in Indonesia about the implementation of Facebook in teaching and the learning process.

There are some researches examine the effectiveness of Facebook to improve students writing, but there are few studies which use blended learning especially in the Indonesian context. Considering the fact above, maximizing the role of teachers in teaching practice is a very crucial factor to achieve the learning goal. Therefore, to fill the gap, this research examines how Facebook supports students' writing activity, the responses of the students towards the use of Facebook, and the depth of the students' and teacher's role in writing process supporting by Facebook.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development of information and communication technologies has rapidly been influenced by the use of various types of media in the learning process. Interactive teaching and learning process between teachers and students has become the primary model of education today. Efforts to improve the quality of education should be more done by teachers in implementing their duties and responsibilities as an educator. One of many attempts to improve the learning process is the use of media which effectively can enhance the quality of learning outcomes. Technology and media are two provisions that play an essential role in improving teacher and student qualities in the learning process. The effectiveness of the learning process is affected by the teacher and learning media used. Both must be related because the selection of a particular method will change the type of media which will be used. Therefore, it can develop a learning goal.

The role of technology and media is essential in teaching writing. Sokolik (2003) describes writing as the mental work, which involves inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into sentences and paragraphs that will be clear to readers. Meanwhile, Urquhart and McIver (2005:60) state that writing helps students express their knowledge as thoughtfully and clearly as they can. So through writing, the students write and share what they are thinking, and the teachers can identify students' ability in using language because writing does not only deal with a list of vocabularies and the knowledge of grammar, but also the ability to organize thought into series of the paragraph. Media helps teachers to motivate students by bringing a real life in the classroom and by presenting language in it using complete communication text. Teachers see that some internet technologies; like social media, can be used to teach English especially writing skill. The use of media social can bring a new atmosphere in learning to the students. They can learn through social media which has already been familiar to them. The teachers use Facebook in the blended learning process to make the learning process more effective. Blended learning is described as a combination of delivery methods which complement each other and work to support student learning (Singh, 2003). It's mean that blended learning involving face-to-face and online learning experiences, it is intended to make learning more productive by giving better teaching tools, more time, and informative data. There are some benefits of blended learning, e.g., increasing students' interaction, participation, learning, and performance, and affecting teachers' approaches of other subjects. One of supporting blended learning using media to improve students' writing skill is Facebook.

Facebook is found to be the most popular social media site used by students. Facebook has the ability to connect learners in new networks of collaborative learning that are both social and academic (Chang, Chen, & Hsu, 2011). It can be used as useful and

enjoyable media in teaching writing because it has features to support the teaching of writing, such as status, groups, notes, chats, page, and many more. The teacher uses one of the features of Facebook that is Facebook Group Discussion. The teacher sees that Facebook Group Discussion can help the students to learn writing easily and enjoyable. The teacher made group discussion for facilitating their discussion after the class in Facebook, students visited FB, and they can discuss material given by the teacher. Students can provide comment or feedback about the content which is considered among them, so they can read the other opinions that possible to enrich their idea about the article discussed. Another benefit of this media in the learning process of writing is the students will be more comfortable and free to be creative without fear and shame because the students have to do it by online instead of face to face. After that, the teacher gives a task related to the material on Facebook, and the students do it after they discuss. Those activities can be very helpful for the students to improve their writing skill because they can write about the things related to their real life and experiences using correct vocabularies and write the right spelling. As the teacher, this media can help the teacher to give more material, so the learning is not limited by time because the teacher and students can do outside of school. The teacher believes that Facebook, and specifically Facebook Groups Discussion, has the potential to improve students' writing skill by being the link between academic "writing" and outside "communication," providing learners with an authentic and personalized context in which to aid their writing.

RESEARCH METHOD

There are overall two kinds of research methodology; they are qualitative research and quantitative research. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3), qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to interpret phenomenon regarding the meanings people bring to them. Since this research is to describe the students' perception, it uses qualitative research. This research aims to describe and interpret the students' perception of using Facebook as media in blended learning. Based on this theory, this research uses descriptive qualitative research. The participant of this research is the seventh-grade students.

Data were collected through observation, questionnaire, interview, and documents. The researcher observed the school first. The way of teaching English in class, the method that was used in teaching English and the condition of the school was observed. A questionnaire was used to explore the students' experience of using blended learning, students' way of learning English, students' experience of using Facebook, students' perception of using blended learning, and students' perception of learning English. For this research, the kind of data was in the form of interview transcription, the answer of the open and closed questionnaire, and the documents of teaching-learning. Meanwhile, the source of the data was the answer of the interview with students, the events of teaching-learning activity and the documents of teaching-learning activity.

The questionnaire was made from the components that were investigated in this research. The respondents of this questionnaire were the students' who have been taught by using blended learning. The questionnaire included questions about the students' experience of using blended learning, students' way of learning English, students' experience of using Facebook, students' perception of using blended learning, and students' perception of learning English. Cresswell (2008: 221) stated observation as the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site. The way of teaching English in class, the method that is used in teaching English, and the condition of the school was observed. The students' who participate in this research was interviewed. The questions that were asked in the interview consisted of questions about their perception of

using blended learning, the benefit and weakness of using blended learning, and their comment of blended learning. The documents analyzed in this research included students' and teacher's activity in a group of Facebook.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the first stage, the writer as the teacher plans a teaching-learning activity to solve the problem found in the teaching-learning process. The plans include the preparation before the teaching-learning process such as making lesson plans, preparing teaching materials and instruments for data collecting. Students met in the class (face-to-face), on selected topics, performed pre-writing activities such as listing, outlining, and mind-mapping individually. In the drafting stage as a classroom activity, the students were to produce first drafts, focusing on content, organization, and structure. In this step, students still had difficulties in developing their ideas and made some grammatical error. The teacher asked students to conduct peer response session in each group to discuss the problem faced by them. After that, they were asked to upload their writing to Facebook Group Discussion.

In the revising stage, the students also conducted an online peer response session, collaboratively working on second drafts. The teacher also responded to students' second drafts and provided feedback for the students. In the fourth stage, the students produced the final draft based on feedback from peers and the teacher in the online class and uploaded it to the Facebook Group Discussion. The teacher discusses the result of students' writing and finds the solution for the obstacles to be applied in the next meeting. Students can improve their English writing skills and knowledge not only from the class instruction but also from cooperative learning.

In other hands, during the teaching-learning process, students not only faced difficulties in developing ideas and doing some grammatical errors but also the problem of internet connection. The writer found that the students still had a problem in working individually. Most students were confused about what they should do to create the text. Besides, some students were busy with their businesses. They were stuck only to the topic without trying to make it more complete. They made text but not in specific and clear. Some of them even didn't understand the instruction, so they post different kinds of text type; narrative and recount, while the others were inferior in elaborating the topic and wrote too short. They just wrote not more than 100 words as the instruction. They were also poor in grammar, vocabulary and the mechanic. The teacher had the students to pay attention towards the way how they create the descriptive text, especially about grammar and mechanic. The teacher also put a stress on the use of capital letter, spelling, and punctuation.

Also, based on the result of the questionnaire, it was clear that the use of Facebook group to teach writing descriptive text got positive responses from the students. Concerning the use of a Facebook group as teaching media, most of the students felt that they were helped in writing descriptive text. This integrated instruction can significantly enhance students' interest and motivation. The students were also enthusiastic in reading their friends' compositions and giving the comment to them. Their comments were about the sentence structure, grammar, spelling, pronoun, vocabulary, the use of the capital letter, or mechanics. Although not all of the students commented on their friends' writing, it was sure that they had read it.

Overall the attitude of the students in the Blended Learning Method is slightly positive, and the students are contributing actively. They get the ease of access to the course materials and work written by the students' peers, get an opportunity to receive feedback on

their writing from their peers and the teacher, gain more confidence in their writing thanks to the chance to compare their ability to write that of their peers. It also increases more confidence for the students to write. Blended Learning creates an on-going interactive and non-threatening learning environment that encourages interactions between students and teacher, provides active teaching and learning process, and also helps students develop their skills. In Blended Learning Method the teacher must understand the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as the internet. They must be capable of using and operating the internet and social media. It is essential for the teacher so that they can implement the method well.

From the explanation above, it is clear that Facebook group is an appropriate media to improve the students writing skill. They made progress in writing descriptive text since they could revise their writing through comments or feedback on the classroom and Facebook group and think critically during the process.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Facebook is an active media in EFL teaching and learning since it helps teachers to maintain and give additional information to their students' learning. It builds good communication between teacher and the students and also provides grades' transparency for the students. Facebook not only give those benefits but also can be accessed anywhere anytime. The teacher's awareness is needed to cope with problems in the use of the Facebook website to improve writing practices. Based on the discussion, the students have an active conversation in a group discussion in Facebook group discussion. They can share their ideas to solve their difficulties. The teacher should avoid teacher-centered class and move towards student-centered classes. Classroom motivating process could be created by utilizing all the available resources inside and outside the class. Students like to write and talk about the things related to their real lives and experiences. So the teachers should always create reasons for learning.

The results of this study highlighted the implementation of the Facebook website in the 21st century English teaching and learning. It is highly suggested whether teachers or educators who are in a similar situation may apply the findings to improve writing skill in the 21st century. Using the Facebook group as one of the teaching-learning media, the teacher needs to explain clearly the procedures that have to be done by the students and the benefits that the students may get by using the media. For EFL curriculum developer, it is highly recommended to include specific tools related to ICT regarding global technological development. For EFL researchers, there is a need to conduct a study as well using different research methods such as R & D or CAR.

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