

The Contribution of Facebook Group in Writing Activity

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This study investigated the contribution of Facebook Group (FG) in writing activity and the students' perception of using FG in writing activity. It is qualitative research - case study. It used purposive sampling technique involving three students at eleventh grade of Senior High School. Interview with open-ended was distributed as the technique of collecting data to allow the participants to explore their ideas. Thus, the data was analyzed by content analysis in which the data passed the process of data reduction, data display and conclusion and verification. The finding revealed that Facebook group just has contribution in pre-writing activity while the others' activities were done in the classroom. Then, through the interview, the students' stated that they felt comfortable in expressing their ideas through Facebook group, thus, they also felt motivated when their friends' gave their comments on their statements.

Key words: Facebook groups, writing activity

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki kontribusi Facebook Group (FG) dalam kegiatan menulis dan persepsi siswa terhadap penggunaan FG itu sendiri dalam kegiatan menulis. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif studi kasus (Case Study). Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik pengambilan sampel purposive dengan cara melibatkan tiga orang siswa kelas sebelas sekolah menengah pertama dengan peringkat kelas yang berbeda. Lalu, interview dengan pertanyaan terbuka didistribusikan sebagai teknik pengumpulan data agar participants dapat mengeksplor ide/gagasan mereka. Kemudian, data yang diperoleh akan dianalisa dengan menggunakan analisis isi (content analysis) yang akan melalui tiga tahapan yakni data reduction, data display and conclusion or verification. Hasil penemuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan Facebook Group hanya memiliki kontribusi pada kegiatan pre-writing, sementara sisanya dilakukan dikelas. Kemudian, melalui interview, ketiga siswa menyatakan jika merasa nyaman dalam mengekspresikan ide/gagasan mereka melalui FG, selain itu, mereka juga merasa termotivasi ketika siswa-siswa lainnya memberikan komentar pada pernyataan mereka.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills which is very important in learning a language that should be acquired by the students. In Trinadiah (2014), Urquhart and McIver (2005) states that writing is an activity in which the students write and share what they are thinking because writing is about expressing knowledge, and you want your students express their knowledge as thoughtfully and clearly as they can. For instance, the students usually use writing as a tool to record the teacher's explanation, to make notes, to do the assignment or exercises, to summarize the lessons, to write their diary, etc. In fact, writing is still difficult and complicated for the second language students because the result of the students' writing is not as the expectation. In every writing composition task, most students fail or cannot reach the minimum criteria standard.

According to Karani (2008), in Indonesian teaching learning process, there are some problems that relate to the English writing process. First, it is about content in which the students still cannot produce an effective text because they cannot construct the main idea and supporting detail into a paragraph. The second is organizing. The students cannot organize paragraph into a good text. Third, it is vocabulary. The students sometimes lack of vocabulary for constructing a good paragraph. So, the students cannot convey their ideas and opinions well. The last is grammar. The students still do mistake when they are using the rules which make their sentence structure incorrect, and the paragraph has no good order of the words in sentence sequence. In other word, the students' problems include the writing procedures, the lack of vocabulary, and grammar. Accordingly, this fact shows that there is discrepancy between the practice with competency standard in the 2013 curriculum that expects the students to be able to analyze the social function, structure, and language features of the text.

Through this phenomenon, the researcher assumes that the difficulties that the students have do not come only from themselves but also from the process of teaching and learning that they have in their classroom. This assumption is supported by Deppeler (as cited in Griffin (2008). Deppeler states that what the teachers do in teaching learning process will influence the students' achievement. Besides, Ayeni and Adunola (as cited Ganyaupfu, 2013) state that the teaching methods used by the teachers also give the impact to students' performance and achievement. Accordingly, the innovation and improvement in teaching and learning process are needed, and one of the ways to realize it is through the social media. Using social media in teaching learning process is considered to be able to bring the new atmosphere and enhances the quality of teaching and learning process. The way teachers in applying them will determine how it can influence the students' performance and achievement well. This statement is supported by Holmes and Gardner (as cited in Trinadiah, 2014). They state that using social media which is included into E-learning will be able to offer new experiences for both teachers and students to enrich their teaching learning experiences through virtual environments that support not just the delivery but also the exploration and application of information and promotion of new knowledge.

Based on the interview, the students state that the teachers have applied one of popular social media - Facebook - for students' writing activity even it was done for one topic of their materials. As we know, nowadays, Facebook is very popular among youth lives. It becomes the forerunner as far as social networking sites go. Facebook is designed in a way that facilitates mass participation from its users. Facebook, therefore, can be seen as a platform in which students are able to appreciate and value the benefits of collaborative learning, which are not

available to them if they work individually. Facebook clearly has the ability to connect learners in new networks of collaborative learning that are both social and academic in nature (Trinadiah, 2014).

Facebook Group (FG) is a feature that is available on Facebook. This feature allows unlimited number of members to participate, communicate, and interact via post and chat style for a specific purpose. For this study, FG was created specifically for the purpose of providing students with a space where they were in control of the content and the direction of their learning, as well as providing more opportunities for students to write. The teacher merely acts as a facilitator for the group. FG also allows almost immediate feedback and fun interaction that the researchers hope will motivate students in improving their writing.

According to Ellison (as cited in Melor, 2007), the connection of using FG in teaching is to provide the convenient environment of development of discourse communities with its varied participatory mechanism. Besides, Al-Hammody (2014) states FG will give the benefits for the students and teaching learning process. For examples, using FG can notice the students' improvement in their writing over extended period of time (Najafi & Hashemi, 2011). On the other hand, using FG also enables students to collaborate and engage in healthy competition each other (Harries & Rea, 2009). Through the activities like discussion, asking questions and requesting for feedback and opinions, learners can notice the progress of their peers and make them feel motivated to do better.

Meanwhile, writing as the main subject discussed has four major activities that should be covered by the teachers: prewriting, drafting, revising and editing. Sorenson (as cited in Trinadiah, 2014) states the writing activities refer to the steps of constructing ideas in order. According to him, first, prewriting is defined as the use of random ideas in developing text when the writer has lack inspiration. The activities in prewriting are brainstorming, free writing, collecting data, note taking, outlining. Second, drafting is defined as writing down some ideas that come into mind. Then, this draft can be shaped and refined in the next stage. This first draft is usually rough, which is why it is called the rough draft. Third, revising is a process when a writer reworks the rough material of the draft to get it in shape. This process is a time-consuming, difficult part of the process because the writer should express the ideas in the best order and in the best way, so the reader can get the writer's idea. The last, editing is the last process of writing. In this process, the writer should hunt for errors, especially in grammatical errors. The writer should edit more than once, so the writing can be free of errors.

In this study, the researcher would like to explain the contribution of FG in writing activity and describe the students' perceptions of using FG in writing activity. This is because the researcher is interesting in how far FG contributes in writing activity and how effective this feature for enhancing the students' motivation. Besides, this research expects that the result of this research would be beneficial. Theoretically, this research is expected to give insight to improve students' writing skill in learning English for the school. Thus, practically, for the English teachers, the research is expected as a source of information about ways to improve the students' writing ability. In addition, for the school, the research is expected to improve its understanding about EFL learning processes. Such understanding will encourage the school to facilitate any efforts to improve the EFL learning processes in the school. Then, for students, the research is expected to make them more interested and motivated to learn and to write

English. For other researchers, the research can give general knowledge of how to improve students' writing skill.

Several studies on FG have been conducted. First, the research by Trinadiah (2014) showed that students were interested in using facebook as their discussion space in learning writing. This application allows them to get input from their peer-comments through FG. Their involvement gave contribution to the progress of their achievement in writing. Another study by Bani-Hani (2014) revealed that FG was effective in teaching EFL writing in which students could develop their vocabulary since they were exposed to group members' posts. Similarly, Al-Hammody's (2014) study showed the benefits of using FG in which students could socialize, share knowledge, give and receive feedback, and learn new words. Using this Facebook page also helped students become motivated and more willing to learn. The other study by Yunus et. al. (2012) found that using Facebook as a tool in teaching writing was an effective way in teaching ESL writing in which the students could learn new vocabularies from reading their friends' comments in the group. Besides, the spell-check feature helps reduce their spelling errors. Based the theories and results of previous research, the researcher is interested in investigating the contribution of FG in students' writing activity and the students' perception of using it.

METHOD

As mentioned, this research investigated the contribution of FG in writing activity and the students' perception of it in which the researcher was concerned with participants' perspectives. As a result, the researcher chose the qualitative research as an umbrella concept to understand and explain the phenomenon with as much description of the natural setting as possible in which the data would be appropriate in form of the words (Yazan, 2015). To be more specific, the researcher used case study to investigate the phenomenon deeply: how the Facebook contributed in writing activity and how the students perceived this application in their learning writing where it gave the opportunity for the researcher to capture the phenomenon in its contextual condition naturally (Yin, 2003, p. 13).

The participants of this research were three eleventh grade students of Senior High School (one male and two females) in Jakarta. The participants were categorized based on their ranks in the school, from the higher, middle and lower. It was done because the researcher wanted to get various and detailed information and perception of the use of FG in writing activities. Accordingly, the participants were selected by using purposive sampling that consisted of individuals who had special qualifications being representative on the basis of prior evidence to make precise information about the contribution of FG in writing activity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

The researcher collected the data through interview. By interview, the researcher was trying to investigate the interviewees' experiences, perceptions, and feelings (Chims, 2008), to find out what was on their minds—what they thought or how they felt about something (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The researcher chose one-on-one interview in which the researcher as the interviewer asked the interviewees face to face (Creswell 2002). Besides, the researcher used open-ended questions to gain understanding about the participants' experiences, perceptions, and feelings without suggesting the participants how they would explore their minds (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The use of open-ended questions provided opportunities for

both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail (Hancock, Windridge, &, 2007).

The researcher used content analysis to analyze data collection to reduce amounts of written data through the categories. According to Cohen and Manion (2007), content analysis is a process of summarizing and reporting written data that focuses on language & linguistic features and meaning in context which uses codes and categories. Thus, in analyzing the data, the researcher followed the procedures of Mile and Huberman (1994). There were three steps that the researcher had done: data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification.

Miles and Huberman (1994) explain what the three steps that researcher must do to conduct qualitative research. First, data reduction refers to the writer activities in selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the data into a note or transcription. The data reduction is done during the research activities. Data collection is analyzed by using a data reduction technique: transcribing, generating categories through coding and interpreting data. Second, data display refers to a technique used in arranging information, description or narration in order to draw the conclusion. By presenting the data, the writer considered what she had to do. In addition, she made the analysis and took action on her understanding. The data already displayed were done through the reduction of the data in order to reduce overlapping unimportant and ambiguous information.

The last step is conclusion or verification. It is to draw conclusion and verification. In this study, conclusions were drawn continuously throughout the course of study. The writer accumulated and formulated her interpretation based on the data gained.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Facebook Group Contribution in Writing Activity

It was found that the teacher just applied FG for pre-writing and drafting activity. Through the interview, the students stated that their teacher had ever asked them to join English FG that the teacher made for their classroom. After the teacher had made sure that her students join the group, the teacher posted the picture relevant to their topic in syllabus. At that time, the teacher taught “Discussion Text” for the students. Then, the teacher asked the students to opine their ideas about that picture. As a result, the students gave their comments related to the picture. Then, the teacher allowed the students to comment each other in time. When the time was over, the teacher gave the next instruction for the students in which the students were asked to arrange the draft of discussion text.

Accordingly, other writing activities like revising and editing were done in the school. It did not mean the teacher did not check and correct the students’ works in the group. Before checking the students’ drafts, the teacher checked the students’ comments on the Facebook related to the picture that she had ever posted. After checking the students’ draft, the teacher asked the students to rewrite their writing about “Discussion Text” before submitting.

Students’ Perception about Using Facebook Group in Writing Activity

Generally, the students admitted that learning through FG was interesting. It gave stimulation for the students to encourage themselves in expressing ideas. Two of three participants stated

that they enjoyed in giving (writing) their ideas and replying others ideas because they did not feel there was someone checking/correcting them.

However, all of the participants supported the use of Facebook in writing activities. They stated that the use of FG in writing activity gave them the opportunity to think more with unlimited time. It was different from the class situation where they were asked to be able to finish their writing as fast as possible because they had limited time. Using FG also allowed them to develop their ideas in writing through reading their friends comments. In addition, the students also learned the new vocabulary from others' comments. Besides, using FG in writing activity also helped the students to develop their argumentation because their teacher let the students to opine their friends' comments.

Regarding the questions posed in this study, the researcher concluded that the use of FG was interesting and beneficial for the students. The researcher found that the FG gave its contribution in pre-writing and drafting activity even the teacher could do revising or editing also through FG. It means the use of FG in prewriting and drafting activity has helped the students in brainstorming process, organizing their thoughts before the actual writing, learning new vocabulary from reading comments of others in the group, reducing spelling errors via the spell-check feature, helping to get a better idea before writing from the ideas or opinions posted by friends, and students found it easier to complete their essays after participating in the FG discussion.

Finding of this research is similar to Melors' research (2007) that indicated that FG was beneficial for students during the pre-writing and drafting phase, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

“...students have enough time to brainstorm while participating in FG discussions, unlike the case in a traditional classroom where time is limited, not to mention the time taken by the teacher's interference and participation in class discussions. Moreover, students have instant access to the comments and writings of their peers with whom they can exchange ideas freely and at their own pace.”

All participants involved in this research stated that the use of FG was beneficial to them especially in changing the atmosphere of writing activity in their classroom. In fact, the participants stated that they felt comfortable in posting their ideas or opinion through Facebook in which it was different from the class situation where the students felt under pressured. On the other hand, they also felt motivated when their friends replied to their comment. As a result, they would be careful in giving or replying comments on the group. However, seen from affective side, this finding had similarity with findings from other studies (Farrugia, 2013; Melor, 2007; Hani, 2014). The studies showed that the use of FG gave the students the positive impacts where the students are more motivated and critical to express their ideas and answer others' opinion. In addition, Smith and Hoyler (2000) state that as the popular media, Facebook and all its features can be useful and enjoyable media in writing because it has features to support writing.

Similarly, VanDoorn and Eklund (as cited in Rodliyah, 2016), reported that using Facebook was perceived positively by the students because of the immediacy of response and irrelevance distance. Also, the use of Facebook could foster long term retention of information and develops a deeper understanding of content that had been discussed in a class.

Kabilan (2013) revealed why the use of FG could help the students in their writing. He stated that FG provided a space where ideas were posted and open to criticism. FG also facilitated students' higher order thinking skills since they organized, synthesized, and analyzed ideas alone and in group. This made up meaningful learning when the members of the group were able to generate ideas that were shared by and built upon through the response and feedback given by peers. A student could also gain confidence in writing through the fact that his or her ideas were supported and agreed upon by peers and made known through the feedback received in the group. While sharing views, exchanging messages and comments on Facebook, students can certainly developed a confidence in writing in English as a result of their online socialization.

From the explanation above, it is clear that the students made progress in their writing. Most of the students could create better composition although there were some students who still had difficulties related to the content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. It can be said that FG is an appropriate media to teach writing. The students made progress in composing since they could improve their writing through comments or feedback given by their friends.

Although the use of FG still cannot cover all the writing activities, this feature has given the positive impact to the students by making them feel comfortable during pre-writing activities. Besides, the use of FG also helps them in collecting the ideas for their drafting activities. Thus, this feature also helps them in getting new vocabularies through students' comments. All in all, using FG can improve the students' writing ability.

CONCLUSION

This research has investigated the contribution of FG in writing activity. It is found that FG has contribution in pre-writing activity where it helps the students in the brainstorming process before the actual writing activity. This is supported by students' responses. The ideas or peer feedback help them get a better idea for writing, and they also find it easier to complete their essays after participating in the FG discussion.

Findings of this research have also shown that the students prefer using FG in writing activity to traditional face-to-face activity because they feel comfortable expressing their ideas. Besides, the writing activity through FG also makes them engaged to think critically. However, though students like to learn independently, a teacher is still required to guide and direct the learning, especially over a virtual discussion space where students are left to their own devices.

It is recommended that further studies need to focus more on the challenges of integrating FG for teaching and improving writing and to find the teachers' perception as well. Experimental studies regarding this topic could also be done to see how affective influences of FG in helping improve students' writing skills.

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