

Students' Perception on Teaching Writing Through Facebook Group in EFL Class

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a case study on teaching writing through the Facebook group in EFL class which is intended to examine the students' perceptions on the use of the Facebook group in teaching and learning EFL writing. Descriptive qualitative by conducting closed-ended questionnaire to 17 students at the twelfth grade of SMAN 2 Ciamis which were selected purposively as the respondents. The findings asserted that the students' perceptions toward the use of Facebook group in teaching and learning EFL writing showed the positive influence that the application of Facebook group gave positive effects to the students, it motivated and made the students enjoy in learning writing.

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Introduction

Teaching writing in EFL class is regularly about teaching EFL grammar. If grammar comes up anywhere in EFL, it is in the writing classroom. Most of EFL students will have some writing skills when the teacher get the students, and they will frequently have an idea that their writing is quite good. Unluckily, it will very often be quite weak. The students often will have quite poor writing skills even at the sentence level.

Consequently, the teacher should take them back to sentence level and begin to teach them very basic structure and how to write. Writing means producing or creating a piece of text. Like speaking, writing requires someone to produce language. Harmer (2001, p. 252) stated that one of the strategies which speakers need to develop is the art of getting around language problems in communication; writers, too, will have to find ways of saying things even though a lack of language makes this difficult. Moreover, he said that "written text has some conventions which separate it from speaking. Apart from differences in grammar and vocabulary, there are issues of letter, word, and text formation, manifested by handwriting, spelling, and layout and punctuations". It means that good content of writing only is not enough. A writer must also have sufficient language components like grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling to facilitate him/her in expressing his/her ideas,

experiences, thoughts, and feelings. The writing should be organized well too, to be able to be easily read and understood by the readers.

Derived from pre-observation which was conducted through an interview to an English teacher of one senior high school in Ciamis (2016), it was found that most of the students have less interest in writing, because of the difficulty of writing. From the students' writing, it was found that they felt hard in organizing their ideas and sentences in writing. It is caused by their insufficient knowledge of language components such as vocabulary and grammar. Dealing with the students' problems, the teachers were recommended to apply an innovative way how to make students interested in writing their purposes. There are so many approaches, methods, techniques, and media that can be used by teachers to solve students' problems.

Harmer (2004) explained that there is a variety item of teaching media that can be used by the teachers to explain language meaning and construction. That also can be helpful both for practical and for motivational reasons. For example by using audio material and video material, such as (1) pictures or images whether drawn, taken from books, newspapers, and magazines, or photographs to facilitate learning. (2) Over-head projectors are instrumental pieces of equipment since they allow us to prepare visual or demonstration. We can show whole texts or grammar exercises, pictures or diagrams, or students' writing. (3) The board is the most versatile piece of teaching equipment, whether it is the more traditional chalk-dust variety or the whiteboard, written on with marker pens. (4) Computer and internet (websites). The websites play a significant role in learning English. There are also some sites designed primarily for students of English as a foreign language where they can exchange e-mails, do exercises, and browse around reading different texts, playing games, or doing exercises. Besides, Jothi, Neelamalar, and Prasad (2011, p. 234), social networking sites are online communities, where people can share interests and activities with others, including family, friends, and strangers. They provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as through chat, messaging, email, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging, and discussion groups. Nowadays, the World Wide Web has grown in popularity, and social networking moved to web-based applications.

Besides, Shih (2013, p. 52) claimed that there is one technique that can improve students' ability in writing. This is writing through social networks especially Facebook. Currently, social networks tools, for example, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Blog, and Facebook have a function as media for the teachers in transferring knowledge to the students in various ways such as online meeting and discussion that were not possible before. In line with this, Bani-Hani et al., (2014, p. 29) argued that Facebook group allows students the opportunity to apply the instruction they practically receive in the classroom outside of the classroom, thereby enhancing their writing skills. 'FB groups' provide ample opportunities for students to practice and improve their writing skills. Also, Yunus and Salehi (2012, p. 87), "Facebook group is a feature that is available on the social networking site Facebook

in which an unlimited number of members are allowed to participate, communicate and interact via post and chat style for a specific purpose." It means that Facebook group, it can be a media to share students' writing work and they can give comments or such a correction each other.

Several studies (Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Ping & Maniam, 2015; Bani-Hani et al., 2014) have indicated that Facebook is an activity in which the students may work individually, in pairs or groups of two or more students. It is a useful and an interesting technique because it gives every student an opportunity to write. Without this knowledge, students may be able to construct grammatical sentences correctly, but still unable to produce pieces of writing rich in ideas and inconsistency with the writing conventions. Thus, by adopting Facebook as a modern technique, the teacher can improve the students' writing ability because it is a useful technique to be applied in the classroom. The students become comfortable to write everything.

Considering those conditions, the writer is interested in conducting a case study at one of senior high school in Ciamis entitled "The Use of Facebook Group in Teaching EFL Writing" to find out the students' perceptions of using the Facebook group as a media in learning writing.

Then, this study is also underpinned by three previous studies whose similar focus on using Facebook group in writing. The first previous study was conducted by Bani-Hani et al., (2014) which focused on utilizing Facebook groups in teaching writing about students' perceptions and attitudes. The second previous study was undertaken by Ping & Maniam (2015) which focused on the effectiveness of Facebook group discussions on writing performance. Then, the last previous study was carried out by Yunus & Salehi (2012) which focused on the effectiveness of Facebook groups on teaching and improving writing about students' perceptions.

Furthermore, the focuses of those previous studies are commonly about the effectiveness of Facebook groups and students' perceptions. Besides, participants of those previous studies are students at the university level. Unfortunately, the study about the use of Facebook group in teaching EFL writing, particularly in teaching descriptive text is rarely found at senior high school level in Indonesia.

Therefore, the writer needed to carry out about the use of the Facebook group in teaching EFL writing at the senior high school level. The study attempted to fill the gap by researching the use of the Facebook group in teaching EFL writing included teachers' ways in teaching EFL writing by using Facebook group and students' perceptions.

In this study, the material that will be discussed is about the text. So many kinds of text, they are narrative, procedure, descriptive, report, recount, essay, etc. In this study, it is decided to select descriptive writing paragraph, where it allowed the students are free to express their ideas into paragraphs in their writing work.

Review of Related Literature

In this study, the theoretical concepts were explained to comprehend the main terms. Those were the term of the Facebook group, the use of Facebook as media in teaching writing, and teaching writing in EFL class.

Facebook Group

According to Yunus and Salehi (2012, p. 87), "Facebook group is a feature that is available on the social networking site Facebook in which an unlimited number of members are allowed to participate, communicate and interact via post and chat style for a specific purpose." They also stated that Facebook Group has the potential to give the youth what they interested in speaking, interacting, and creating a positive environment that can encourage and conducive for aiding the writing process for the young people of the youth generation of today. Meanwhile, Bani-Hani et al., (2014, p. 29) argued that Facebook group allows students the opportunity to apply the instruction they practically receive in the classroom outside of the school, thereby enhancing their writing skills. 'FB groups' provide ample opportunities for students to practice and improve their writing skills.

The Use of Facebook as Media in Teaching Writing

Majid, Stapa, &Keong, (2015, p. 33) stated that "Facebook is a social networking site which can be utilized as an educational technology tool that facilitates online communications between second language learners and their friends." It means that Facebook group can be applied as teaching media of writing academic setting, especially in Ciamis that the application of Facebook group which is never possible before.

Roberts (2009, p. 5) emphasized the reasons why Facebook is promising for the foreign language classroom in four ways: First, Facebook is internet based, it can be accessed merely by cellphones. Second, many students have been using Facebook actively, so teachers do not need to explain in detail how to use it. Third, Facebook is always free; to use it, students only need to have an e-mail address and internet access, and fourth, it is ideal for out-of-class time, it keeps valuable class time available for other essential activities. Ping and Maniam (2015, p. 31) stated that language learning occurs outside and informally. Informal learning, through a medium like ICT therefore, is a significant alternative environment for language practice and use and thus, should not be taken lightly. Informal learning experiences are seen as the link or the bridge between social media and academic content. So, it offers more opportunities for students to be highly engaged with educational content informal learning settings.

Teaching Writing in EFL Class

Writing is one essential skill in learning English beside listening, speaking, and reading. To write means to communicate using written language. In writing, all information is delivered through text. Writing means producing or creating a piece of text. Like speaking, writing requires someone to produce language. Harmer (2001, p. 252) stated that one of the strategies which speakers need to develop is the art of getting around language problems in communication; writers, too, will have to find ways of saying things even though a lack of language makes this difficult.

Regarding Hyland (2003, p. 9), "Writing is learned, not taught, so writing instruction is nondirective and personal. Writing is a way of sharing personal meanings, and writing courses emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her views on a topic". It means that to write something; a writer needs to have an idea or memory of certain event or phenomenon and be able to construct that idea or memory in a certain order so that the reader can catch the meaning concluded in the text. Harmer (2001, p. 255) wrote that "written text has some conventions which separate it from speaking. Apart from differences in grammar and vocabulary, there are issues of letter, word, and text formation, manifested by handwriting, spelling, and layout and punctuations".

Methodology

This section encompasses a concise account of methods underpinning the study. Several points to discuss our research design, research participants, research site, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to the collection and qualitative analysis data. A qualitative approach has similar processes with quantitative, but qualitative rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs. In analyzing the information, a qualitative approach is commonly using multiple steps of analysis (Creswell, 2014, p. 139). It means that the writer is allowed to work with more than one data-collecting technique such as observation, questionnaire, and interview. This study also has a particular case study because it carried out in small scale. "A case can be an *individual*: it can be a *group* - such as a family, or a class, or an office, or a hospital ward; it can be an *institution* - such as a school or a children's home, or a factory" (Gillham, 2000, p. 1).

Research Participants

To determine the sample, the writer used purposive sampling technique because there was more than one class of twelfth grade in the school. Yin (2011, p. 88) stated that in qualitative research, the sample is likely to be chosen in a deliberate

manner known as purposive sampling. Thus, the sample of this study consisted of one-twelfth grade class and one English teacher of one senior high school in Ciamis. In choosing the sample, the writer intentionally selected individuals to understand the phenomenon; in this case, the teacher and students who are applying Facebook group in learning and teaching writing.

Research Site

This study conducted in SMAN 2 Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia. The school was mainly chosen because there were an English teacher and students who used a Facebook group in teaching and learning EFL writing. Thus, the writer could get the data quickly to answer the research questions.

Data Collection

To get the answer of the first research questions the writer conducted non-participant observation in the class that chosen, then, to enrich the data the writer also did a semi-structured interview to the teacher, because the writer is allowed to improve the interview by giving other questions that still related to the context or topic. Meanwhile, to get the answer to the second research question the writer gave the closed-ended questionnaire to the students that chosen to be the sample of the study.

Data Analysis

The data analyzed descriptively due to the reason that the data emerge from the qualitative study are descriptive, the data were reported in words. The analysis process was commenced by making a verbatim transcription of interviews. Regarding Gillham, (2000, p. 71) "the researcher cannot analyze an interview just by listening to it," "but verbatim transcription brings home to the researcher that much of what people say in redundant or repetitive." Then, the transcriptions included the questionnaire data will be read repeatedly.

The data described some description in form percentage also be used in this study. The result of the interview categorized into a condensed version produces clarification towards the questionnaire data. To ensure the validity and reliability of data, the writer used the triangulation technique, as stated by Yin (2011, p. 81) Triangulation also can be applied throughout a study. Then, the triangulation technique needs three or more different resources.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, the results of the study were discussed to present the comprehension regarding the study deeply.

Findings

Based on the data from classroom observation and interview, it answered the first research question of this study “How does the teacher teach EFL writing by using Facebook group?” that the teacher used Facebook group only as a media for students doing the task and writing practice outside of the classroom. The teacher did not use Facebook for delivering the material of the lesson in the classroom. The teacher offered the material as usual to the students by giving some examples and questions related to the content, and at the end of the lesson the teacher always instructed students to keep writing and post their writing to the Facebook group that made by the teacher, then the students also taught to keep giving comment and correction one another.

The teacher instructs it to help students in arising their motivation in writing, and the teacher hoped that students would be more interactive. It is also supported by Bani-Hani et al., (2014, p. 29) who argued that Facebook group allows students the opportunity to apply the instruction they practically receive in the classroom outside of the school, thereby enhancing their writing skills. The Facebook group provides students with ample opportunities to practice and improve their writing skills.

The data gotten from questionnaire could be concluded that the majority of respondents gave positive responses or perceptions toward the application of Facebook group in teaching EFL writing. It also answered the second research question "What are students' perceptions on the use of the Facebook group in teaching EFL writing?" The data supported by the data gotten from an interview with the teacher who was researched in this study, the teacher claimed that the teacher got excellent responses from the students, they felt happy to learn and practice writing by using a Facebook group.

Thus, the application of Facebook group gave positive effect to the students, it motivated and made the students enjoy in learning writing. However, there were statement which is supported the findings above, that is Facebook group has the potential (to be used in the academic setting) to give the youth what they are interested in speaking, interacting, and creating a positive environment that can encourage and conducive for aiding the writing process for the young people of the youth generation of today (Yunus and Salehi, 2012, p. 87).

Discussion

The writer analyzed the data from the classroom observation, interview, and students' questionnaire that were conducted during the study in SMAN 2Ciamis. Based on the data gotten from the study conducted in SMAN 2Ciamis, the writer compared the result of the present study with the results from three previous studies. The result of the present study was similar to the results of three previous studies.

The first previous study was conducted by Bani-Hani et al., (2014) entitled Utilizing Facebook Group in Teaching Writing: Jordanian EFL Students' Perceptions

and Attitudes. The result of this study was same as the result of the present study that the respondents' perceptions were positive. The respondents who took part in this study felt that utilizing a Facebook group in language instruction did indeed assist in language acquisition and helped to better develop writing skills, particularly in the pre-writing phase, as well as allows students to build their vocabulary better and lessen spelling mistakes.

However, even the second previous study had a different research design, but it showed a similar result with the present study. Ping and Maniam undertook the second previous study (2015) entitled *The Effectiveness of Facebook Group Discussions on Writing Performance: A Study in Matriculation College*. The result showed that there were positive attitudes of college students on Facebook group discussions. The writer of the second previous study got positive feedback from the respondents. In contrary, there was a significant effect of Facebook group discussions on students' writing performance.

The last previous study also had a similar result with the present study. It was carried out by Yunus and Salehi (2012) entitled *The Effectiveness of Facebook Group on Teaching and Improving Writing: Students' Perceptions*. The result of the third previous study showed that Facebook group is an effective tool in improving the students' writing skills, especially in the brainstorming of ideas before the actual writing.

Conclusions and Suggestions

In this section, some conclusions are highlighted based on the results of data analysis which are based upon the data from classroom observation, interview, and questionnaire in the previous chapter. In this regard, there are two conclusions to answer the research questions which are presented as follows:

Firstly, "how does the teacher teach EFL writing by using Facebook group?" There were found some ways or steps which were used by the teacher in teaching EFL writing by using Facebook group; the teacher made a private group in Facebook to be used by the students as media in writing practice outside of the classroom. The teacher delivered the materials to the students as usual at the school during the English lesson, the teacher asked some questions to the students related to the content, checked students' understanding of the material given, and gave motivation to the students to keep writing and posting their writing to the Facebook group. The students were instructed by the teacher to do the task (write some paragraphs of descriptive text), and they had to post the article to the Facebook group at least twice a week, and the teacher would assess it. The students also were hoped to do some interaction in the Facebook group, such as giving comment and correction each other in each posted text.

Secondly, "what are students' perceptions toward the use of a Facebook group in teaching and learning EFL writing?" The students' perceptions toward the application of Facebook group in teaching and learning writing showed a positive impact. In case, the students gave good signs about the application of Facebook group in teaching and learning writing, because of the students' answers majority indicated the positive responses or perceptions. Such as, the students were like to practice writing by using Facebook group, they were also enjoy writing by using Facebook group, because it was motivating them to learn English, the use of a Facebook group made them interested in following the lesson in the classroom and doing the task out of the school, and even though the use of Facebook group in teaching EFL writing is new learning technique for them but they claimed that learning by using Facebook group could help them to learn English easily especially in writing aspect.

At last, the study provides some suggestions for English teachers, educational elements, and people (students or learners) who use English as a foreign language, and for further researchers.

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