ONLINE DISCUSSIONS IN ENHANCING STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILLS IN WRITING FOR THE MEDIA CLASS

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan

Edy Hermawan
112014062

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS
UNIVERSITAS KRISTEN SATYA WACANA
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Online Discussions in Enhancing Students’ Writing Skills in Writing for the Media Class

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ABSTRACT

The study discovered students’ perceptions of English writing skills from the perspective of the learners. The study investigated online discussions as a component in enhancing students’ comprehension related to English writing skills. It conducted to answer the research question: ‘What are students’ perspectives on the use of online discussions in their Writing for Media class in enhancing their writing skills? The participants of the study were 20 selected students from two classes at the Writing for the Media class at the English Language Education Program at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga. On the questionnaire, the participants were asked to provide written responses related to online discussions in Writing for the Media class. This study was conducted qualitatively, supported by open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as the instruments. Those samples were used to provide richer descriptions in the data collection. In addition, the samples were collected using a quota-sampling technique. The data analysis revealed to prove that online discussions helped students in term of receiving peer feedback, increasing students’ awareness of misspelled and grammatical errors, and experiencing flexible learning. On the other hand, students’ passive behavior and poor internet connection were possessed as two major challenges the students faced in the implementation of online discussions. Finally, this study would seem to indicate the importance of online discussions among students in increasing their writing skills. It also suggested different strategies to students in achieving their learning goals during the students’ learning process.

Keywords: online discussions, definition of online discussions, benefits of online discussions, schoology.
INTRODUCTION

English writing has become one of the demanding skills for many university students, who are non-native English speaker (NNES) (Andrade, 2009). It might cause some difficulties because English writing becomes an obligation for the students to pass the class. Thus, the use of online discussions is one of the possible answers to support students' writing abilities.

Validating the importance of online discussions in students’ writing, many students have been helped with the existence of online discussions in many universities and countries. In several countries such as Germany, USA, China, Thailand, and Netherland, online discussions were adapted in educational contexts (Seethamraju, 2014). It was possible that the use of online discussions in many universities has been increased. Andresen (2009) stated that the percentage of colleges and universities in the United States increased from 73 percent- 82 percent in using online discussions. In addition, online discussions also tend to increase the students’ interaction, on how they communicate in the online platform or web-based. Basset (2011) found that it was possible to assess students’ individual contributions via online discussions. In the other words, it was possible to support students’ needs through online discussions. A small liberal arts college in the Midwestern United States has applied online discussions to increasing students’ interaction, satisfaction and learning outcomes (Martyn, 2005).

Online discussions helped students and teachers interact through a platform or single web-based, which increases students’ work effectively. Online discussions aimed to help students to extend their face-to-face discussions in their
online environment (Ellis, Goodyear & Prosser, 2007). Online discussions offered both teachers and students to connect in a single platform, which is achieving writing subjects together through electronic content-based (Andresen, 2009). It has offered real communication where teachers and students have real communication with a single web-based. In addition, online discussions tend to lead each student to work effectively that is re-checking grammar and structure in their writing. Morgan 2006 stated that online discussions might be the only medium available for students to discuss the class materials and their thoughts in an online classroom. On the other words, online discussions allow students to interact with the other friends, which are offering students’ contribution to engage in online discussions (Bain, 2006). Through online discussions, each student has interacted by a single system of online discussions at the different time.

In essence, some classes in ED-UKSW also implemented online discussions. Moreover, one of the classes is writing for the media classes. This study was aimed to explore learning interactions through online discussions, in which how online discussions can enhance students’ writing skills. Finally, the exploration related to the use of online discussions was guided by the research question:

*What are students’ perspectives on the use of online discussions in their writing for the media class in enhancing their writing skills?*

Finally, this research has benefits to both students and teachers. For students, it hoped that students could enhance and develop their English writing through Schoology. It enclosed of improving their grammar structures, spellings, and word
choices. For teachers, this paper could present indicators in increasing students’ English writing ability through online discussions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of Schoology in online discussions

According to Sicat (2015), Schoology was a web-based k-12 learning environment. It offered a user-friendly and secure environment for the students. It also involved teachers, students, and parents accessing the materials in the class through one platform. There are some advantages in the use of Schoology. First, it related to the accessibility. It helped students accessing the provided class materials from each of their courses in a single web-based. Second, it increased relationship among teachers and students anytime, especially in their writing learning concerns. It also offered more opportunities for the students to explore more their English writing skills through send and reply instantly in messages mode. Irawan, Sutadji, and Widiyanti (2017) stated that Schoology also gave more opportunities for passive students to improve their learning experiences. It also offers real communication through a single web-based to support the students in constructing their writing skills, such as enhancing their new vocabularies, sentence structures, and other aspects of writing.

Nevertheless, besides Schoology has benefits for students, there were also drawbacks. It includes differentiating many features and reducing class efficiency. Schlager (2016) stated that the newest tool and various features in Schoology could lead some difficulties for the students in accessing the class materials. It might cause some problems because students are not ready with many features
such as a symbol of notification, updates, and newest tools for accessing the materials. In addition, Gaillard (2010) found that time consumption is one of the drawbacks of the use Schoology. Many features in Schoology that could reduce class efficiency for teachers. In this case, because there are many discussions post, it may cause some difficulties for the teacher to grade them. Therefore, this research exposed that the teachers need to know the students’ perspectives to succeed the use of Schoology in increasing students’ writing.

Advantages of Online Discussions for Students’ Writing Skills

This study focused on the use of online discussions in Writing for the Media class. First, the advantages of online discussions encourage students to improve their writing skills and develop their critical thinking. In this case, students could practice using grammar and vocabulary appropriately before posting their comments in the discussion forums (Krasnova, 2015). Second, besides increasing students’ writing skills, online discussions also tend to help students to be active in accessing the content and improving their Internet skills (Serlin, 2005). It helped students developing their learning objectives in the use of online discussions. On the other words, online discussions also gave positive effects for the students, such as allowing them to interact and communicate in the online forums.

Al-Shalchi (2009) also stated that students would have positive learning experiences in the use of online discussions. It covered allowing students to interact and communicate with others, such as giving comment and feedback in their online forums. In addition, it helped students increase their awareness of
their writing mistakes, while they were communicating in forum discussions. Aviles and Eastman (2012) mentioned that teachers and students could communicate in real time in a single web-based. It also encouraged students in the assignment and involved students’ interest in enhancing their writing ability in online discussions via Schoology. According to Bradford (2007) mentioned that the students’ progress could be monitored by the teachers via Schoology. It included students writing progress and students’ attendances. Therefore, from those advantages of the use online discussions, students and teachers can have benefits in different ways through online discussions.

Challenges of Implementation of Online Discussions

There are some challenges in the implementation of online discussions on other platforms in order to support students’ writing skills. It covered technical problems dealing with posting delivery, signing up and confusion from the students in implementing online discussions in their class (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2015). Besides, other challenges are lack of participation and dominance students who dominated the discussions in the online forums (Seethamraju, 2014). Moreover, less of interactions among students and teachers also caused another challenge in the implementation of online discussions. Finally, Serlin (2005) stated that no face-to-face meeting was one of the problems occurred in the use of online discussions, such as less of explanation and unclear feedback.
Previous Studies on Online Discussions

A related study carried out by Xia (2013) in the Curtin University Australia. This study aimed to get the data by categorizing groups into a forum discussion to determine students’ roles and level of participation in the online discussions. This study has involved 85 active students and 35 passive students in the implementation of online discussions in Writing for the Media class. The result exposed that students who actively participate in the online discussions got high final scores. However, students’ participation level in the online discussion forum must be associated with their final marks, so students automatically joined in the forum discussions.

Kent, Laslo, and Rafaeli (2016) carried out a recent study in the Israeli (EFL) context. This study focused on individual learning strategies and learning process through the interactions among the learners and their instructors during online discussions. It involved about 231 students from three universities and different faculties in Israel. The result showed that there were correlations between students’ online interactions and learning outcome assessments in different communities.

Abdolzadeh, Ghafoori, and Ahangari (2015) undertook a related study at Jahad-e-Daneshghahi Institute in Tabriz, Iran. The study Involved 40 students of 15 males and 25 females. Those participants studied in an argumentative writing class. This study aimed to investigate the effect of online discussions in an argumentative writing class before and after the Iranian EFL learners using online discussions. The results exposed that the majority of the students who have been
applying online discussions have significantly improved their writing such as grammar and vocabulary.

Ertmer, Richardson, Belland, and Camin (2007) investigated the quality of peer feedback in improved students’ writing through online discussions at Department of Curriculum and Instruction Purdue University. This study focused on how reviewing peers’ projects might facilitate students’ learning performance, especially in their writing. It involved 15 graduate students (10 female, 5 male) enrolled in an online technology integration course during the spring semester of 2005. The result exposed that peer feedback in online discussions helped students improve their writing skills. It helped students in identify their problem of the writing mistakes and possible ways to solve the problem.

Wu and Hiltz (2004) undertook a recent study at Department of Information Systems College of Computing Sciences New Jersey Institute of Technology. This study investigated the flexibility of online discussions in improving students’ writing skills. The study involved 116 of students in two undergraduate courses and one graduate course. The result exposed that online discussion beneficial and useful to the students. It proved with the students’ answer from open-ended questions designed in this study. Students felt that online discussions have benefited their learning quality and enjoyed the flexibility of online discussions.

Most of the studies in previous studies examined that the use of online discussions helped students in increasing their individual learning processes. The previous studies also suggest that online discussions have benefits to both students and teachers such as improving students’ writing skills, receiving peer feedback,
and experiencing flexible learning to improve students’ writing. In addition, the previous studies aimed to explore more the benefits in the use of online discussions in improving students’ writing skills. More specifically, in the literature review only discussed the benefits of the use online discussions for students’ writing, the drawbacks have not been investigated sufficiently on it. Therefore, this study tends to explore more both benefits and drawbacks of the use online discussions in improving students’ writing skills.

THE STUDY

This study investigated the use of online discussions in enhancing students’ writing in Writing for the Media class. To achieve the research objective, this study approached the study qualitatively. There are some characteristics of qualitative research (Hatch, 2002). First, it related to naturally occurring settings. In this research, naturally occurring setting tend to determine where and from whom data will be collected, determined instrumentation, determined planning data collection, and determined planning data analysis. Second, it related to participants’ perspectives. It exposed to understand the world from the individuals’ perceptions of the realities that surround them. Finally, from both naturally occurring setting and participants’ perspectives in a qualitative data, this study was expected to provide rich descriptions in the data collections and analysis.
Context of the Study

In brief, this research conducted in Writing for the Media classes in English Language Education Program at Satya Wacana Christian University Salatiga. Therefore, this class selected because of the lecturers uses the Schoology to do online discussions. First, students could work in their writing either individually or collaboratively through Schoology. Second, the students were taught by a teacher who experts in the use of online discussions.

The Research Participants

Quota sampling used to select the participants in this research. Ary et al. (2010) stated that quota sampling choosing typical cases from diverse strata, which the result is a miniature of approximation of the population and selected based on the characteristics made in this study. Therefore, from two classes of Writing for the media, 26 participants selected as the representative from the population who were active in posting the information in the online discussions. Hence, this study hoped the participants would accurately explain their experiences intensely.

Data Collection Instruments

The data of this research collected from Writing for the Media classes by distributing open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The first instrument collected by open-ended questionnaire. Open-ended questionnaire tends to allow the respondents freely expressing their opinions without influenced by the researcher. It also helps participants produced more various answers (Reja,
Manfreda, & Vehofar, 2003). The second instrument collected by semi-structured interviews. According to Alshenqeeti (2014) stated that semi-structured interview is more versions of flexible methodology. It gave more opportunity for interviewees to answer the questions expands in the answer forms. In other words, semi-structured interviews used in this study to know more specific the participants’ information. In addition, this study hoped that the participants would be more flexible in answering the questions, so other relevant information can still arise. Moreover, follow-up questions will use when the respondents do not understand the particular topics (Harrel & Bradley, 2009). Finally, it consists of two questions that were adapted and developed from Sicat (2015); Vurdien (2012); Mutiaraningrum and Cahyono (2015). The questions were: [1] Can online discussions in your class enhance your writing skill? Please give some examples to support your answer! [2] What are challenges of doing online discussions in your class? Please give some examples to support your answer!

**Data Collection Procedures**

This study conducted several steps to collect the data. First, asked permission to the lecturers as the procedure to conduct the study in his/her class. Second, gave insights and the purposes of this research to the participants. Third, in this study, the questionnaires were distributed twice to get more data that are precious from the participants. Finally, the questionnaires were distributed and were analyzed after the six (3) participants were selected as the follow-up in this study.
Data Analysis Procedures

After the interview data were analyzed, the data was developed based on the themes. First, the data interviews were developed into some sub-themes using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was used to categorizing participants’ answer by giving an initial theme to the participants’ responses (Zacharias, 2013). Second, the data of this study were transcribed based on the similar participants’ answers. In addition, thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method, which helped this study in collecting their data more flexible with some useful tools for identifying, analyzing, and reporting the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, some issues in this research answered the research question related to the use of online discussions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presented the finding of the students’ perspectives on the use of online discussions in Writing for the Media classes. The present study exposes 26 cited responses in both open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. As an attempt to provide trustworthy discussions, this study would provide the translated versions of the excerpt of the students’ written responses. In addition, this study exposed two major categories. First, the data presented the advantages of online discussions. It covered receiving peer feedback, experiencing flexible learning, and increasing students’ awareness of misspelled and grammatical errors. Second, the data displayed the challenges of online discussions. It covered students' passive behavior and poor internet connections.
Advantages of online discussions

As the results of the questionnaire and interview, this study found six (6) categories that students noted as advantages on the use of online discussions during their learning process. Specifically, the responses cover six (6) cited responses into different sub-themes, namely receiving peer feedback, increasing students’ awareness of misspelled, experiencing flexible learning, freeing students to comment, practicing to write a thesis statement, sharing new ideas and contents.

The results displayed in Table 1 exposed three major advantages that are receiving peer feedback, increasing students’ awareness of misspelled, experiencing flexible learning based on participants' answer in questionnaire and interview.

Table 1 Analyzed students’ perspectives related to the advantages of using online discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ perspectives</th>
<th>Cited in questionnaire data</th>
<th>Cited in interview data</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Peer feedback</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Students’ Awareness of Misspelled and Grammatical errors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing Flexible Learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeing students to comment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing to write a good thesis statement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing new ideas and contents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of cited responses</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study was continued by discussing three major students’ perspective on the use of online discussions. The students’ interview scripts attempted to provide reliable discussion.
Receiving Peer Feedback

Receiving feedback was widely known as the easier ways for students in increasing their writing abilities. It can be seen from the data both in questionnaire and in interview. The result shows the students' perspective related to the use of online discussions as their medium in increasing their writing skills. As much 42% both in the questionnaire and an interview, the participants thought that peer feedback such as receiving comments and suggestions could improve their writing performances. The student 8 and student 2 mentioned the main reason. They confirmed that student who actively receives a comment from other classmates could ask additional questions/suggestions to understand what they mean:

(Excerpt 1)
I could get feedback from the different point of views such as from my classmate or my lecturer in the online discussions. It increased my writing abilities because I could correct my writing mistakes from their feedback. Therefore, if I get a wrong word or grammatically errors, I can faster get the feedback from them than I should wait for so long in the next meeting.
(S8/ Questionnaire/ translated by the researcher)

(Excerpt 2)
I could get feedback from my classmate with the new correct sentence if I made a mistake in my comments such as misspelled or grammatical errors. Moreover, my classmate also gave me some suggestions whether I should add more words or just cut the inappropriate words in my writing. Therefore, online discussions helped me to improve my writing abilities.
(S2, Interview, February 9, 2018)

The finding is in line with Xia, Fielder, and Siragusa (2013) that the classmates’ feedback or lecturer’s feedback could give impact to the students’ learning process. It could increase their critical thinking level and self-awareness in their writing activities. It is also in harmony with the belief that peer feedback could increase students’ performances and self-awareness in the process of learning (Ertmer, Richardson, Belland, & Camin, 2007). Receiving peer feedback,
either lecturers from or classmates could stimulate students to practice more of their writing skills through online forums.

**Increasing Students’ Awareness of Misspelled and Grammatical errors**

It has been found that online discussions could increase students’ awareness of misspelled and grammatical errors. It is generally agreed that send comments in online forums could make the participants aware of their writing mistakes such as misspelled and grammatical errors. The result shows as much 28% is the second rank majority of students' perspectives in the use of online discussions. The first reason, since there was no spelling and grammar checker in the comment space, the students should independently correct their mistakes such as grammar, spelling, and wording manually. The second reason is it could disturb other participants’ understanding to reply or comments in the discussion forums if their grammar or their spelling was incorrect. It confirmed by three students’ answers in both questionnaire and an interview that actively experienced using of online discussions:

(Excerpt 3)

Online discussions help us on writing skill especially in writing for the media class. In addition, there was a different situation of writing such as in real situation ‘in the classroom’ and online situation ‘in the online forums.’ Online discussions help us in increasing awareness of misspelled word that fossilized. Therefore, usually, I rechecked my comments using online dictionary whether the word spelled correctly or not.

(S2, Interview, February 9, 2018, translated by the researcher)

(Excerpt 4)

When I wanted to reply someone’s comments or just wanted to write down about my ideas, I would recheck mine because I did not want to make an error. In addition, online discussions helped students to be more careful about their grammar and spelling. Therefore, I think it would improve their writing abilities because I believe by writing with good structure and grammatically correct
through online way, it could stimulate them to be more aware of their mistakes in another context of writing.  
(S3/ Questionnaire/ translated by the researcher)

(Excerpt 5)  
After I wrote a comment in online discussions, I rechecked my writing in comment space whether my grammar, wording, and structure are correct or not. Since there was no grammar and spelling checker in a comment space, students should aware and think again of their writing mistakes. Therefore, online discussions helped me to repair those small mistakes in my writing.  
(S1, Interview, March 22, 2018)

It believed that the use of online discussions could make the students achieve their learning goals by actively improving their writing skills such as study the grammar, on how they use it in the different situation. This finding accords with Vonderwell’s (2007) belief that online discussions give more opportunities for students to re-think and interpret their learning before they posted the comments on online discussion forums. It indicated that the online discussion forums allowed students to be more aware of their writing mistakes as discussed above. Therefore, it helped students developing their wording and grammar, whether it is appropriate or not if they use it in the different context of the study.

Experiencing Flexible Learning  
It has been found that the participants could experience the flexible learning through online discussions. The least is the students' perspectives in the use of online discussions as the medium in increasing their writing abilities. It can be seen that online discussions gave more opportunities for students to join in the online forums without thinking about the limitation of time (Wang & Woo, 2007).
It can be proved by the students’ answer related to the flexibility of learning processes through online discussions:

**Excerpt 6**
I prefer using online discussions, especially through Schoology because I could interact with the teacher or classmates everywhere and every time. Therefore, there is no limited time to join in online discussions forum.
(S1, Interview, March 22, 2018)

**Excerpt 7**
It can help me to develop my writing skill because I can ask feedback from my friend about my writing. Besides that, if I don’t understand with class materials, I ask the teacher anytime.
(S10/ Questionnaire/ translated by the researcher)

Interestingly, some studies have the same evidence as the result of the participant answer's in which the flexibility of joining the online forums based on personal learning preferences could make increase students' convenience. This finding appears to share Lim’s (2004) belief that the likeness of the flexibility of online learning could make students less of stressful. It also accords with a belief Burton and Goldsmith (2002) that an online discussion is a more effective or timely assessment. It could improve students’ work without frustration and confusion in their online courses.
Challenges of online discussions

This study was summarized that the use of online discussions was still inapplicable. It has been found through the data both questionnaire and interview.

The results displayed in Table 2 exposed two major challenges that are students’ passive behaviors and poor internet connections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ perspectives</th>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Students’ passive behavior</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor internet connections</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of cited responses</td>
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<td></td>
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Students’ Passive Behaviors

It has been found that students' passive behavior is one of the challenges in increasing students' writing skills through online discussions. From examining the evidence, students stated that the challenges came from their classmates who not actively joined in the online forums. It may cause some new challenges, such as the other students will not contribute again in the online forums. In addition, students also stated that they get bored because they only face certain students who actively engaged in online discussions:

(Excerpt 8)
I do not think an online discussion is effective, because of students’ awareness to join in an online forum is less. I prefer to use the real discussions or face-to-face because I can share a different thought with other classmates.
(S6/Questionnaire/translated by the researcher)

(Excerpt 9)
Based on my perspective, an online discussion is not effective because there will happen of un-interactive online forums, in which other classmates would not participate in this online forum.
(S3, Interview, March 22, 2018)

This finding confirms to Xia’s (2003) belief that students’ participation must associate with their final marks, so students will actively contribute to the
online forums. It could encourage students that online discussions also give impact to their final marks. This finding would also seem to indicate that students’ awareness of joined in the online forums may cause some problems such as students will be bored and will not contribute again in the online forums (Seethamraju, 2014). Therefore, both teacher and students should cooperate engaged in implementing the use of online discussions.

**Poor internet connections**

Another challenges students faced was poor internet connections. It can be seen that some students have difficulty in accessing the platform that students’ use in doing online discussions. In addition, students could not join in the online discussions forums because of the poor internet connections in their home:

(Excerpt 10)
The biggest challenge when I did the online discussions was the poor internet connections. Sometimes, it is quite difficult to join in the online forums when I get bad internet connections.
(S4/ questionnaire/ translated by the researcher)

This finding would seem to indicate that the poor internet connection was the other challenges in implementing online courses (Tseng, 2008). Moreover, all of the parties who responsible and contribute to the implementation of online discussions in the universities or schools should be aware of this problem. These finding also accord with Ubaidullah’s (2013) belief that poor internet connection also became an obstacle for students to join in the implementing online courses. In addition, providing good internet connections for students in the education areas such as universities and schools could make students able to face the challenges. Therefore, providing good internet connections in school or universities could
help students face their challenges. Moreover, every student who had implemented online discussions could successfully join in the online forums. Then, although this study also exposed some challenges in the implementation of online discussions in increasing students’ writing skills, it still maintained that online discussions could be one of educational technology that teachers can use to assist their students either inside or outside their classroom. Thus, this study would seem to indicate that the use of online discussions in increasing students’ writing skills considered successful.
CONCLUSION

As discussed through practical illustrations and provided clear data, this study attempted to explore students’ perspectives on the use of online discussions on improving and developing their writing skill. In essence, this study approved that online discussions can be effectively improved students’ writing skill, in which students’ could receive peer feedback and experiencing flexible learning. It also revealed that the existence of online discussions helped most of the participant. It proved by the result that their writing skills increased such as grammar, spelling, and wording. Nevertheless, as discussed Seethamraju’s (2014) online discussions still need to be improved. The fact is most of the participants put more effort on how they contribute into the discussion forums. In addition, students’ awareness of joined in the discussion forums possessed as the major challenge that they face in the use of online discussions. Finally, this study would seem to indicate that receiving peer feedback and increasing students’ awareness of misspelled and grammatical errors considered successful in increasing students’ writing skills. In addition, it offered flexible learning to increase their writing skills without limitation of time. Those are the key factors in determining the successfulness of the implementation of using online discussions during the students’ learning process.

This study offers several recommendations regarding the use of online discussions in increasing students’ writing skills. First, teachers could monitor students’ performances and students’ attendances in writing through a single platform (Bradford, 2007). For this reason, as Serlin’s (2005) claim, students
would be more active joined in achieving the learning objectives together. Second, Online discussions offered both teachers and students to interact through a single platform. In this sense, it offered real communication where teachers and students could communicate through a single web-based (Andresen, 2009). Third, teachers could encourage students to improve their writing skills and develop their critical thinking through online discussions. In this case, teachers could provide evidence to develop students’ insights related to their writing problems (Krasnova, 2015). However, Serlin (2005) stated that no face-to-face meeting could make ineffective classroom learning activities such as less of explanation and unclear feedback.

Moreover, to implement the use of online discussions more effective, students should be taught by a professional teacher who really experts and experienced in the use of online discussions. In addition, reduced internet connections also became a possible challenge in implementing online course (Ubaidullah, 2013). It could disturb students’ learning progress to join in the discussion forums. In conclusion, the study proved that online discussions helped students to be active and freer in expressing their ideas in online forums. Moreover, some issues in this research answered the research question related to the use of online discussions. Besides, this study hoped to provide broader insights for EFL teachers and students in increasing and exploring their English writing skill through online discussions. Moreover, future studies are encouraged to explore more about the students’ perspectives related to the use of online discussions as a platform for increasing their writing skills. Future empirical
research needed to justify the effectiveness of online discussions in EFL context and to provide better insight for teachers and students in applying online discussions as a learning standard. Therefore, finally, this study endorses that all of the parties who were applying online discussions in the EFL with good internet connections could communicate in real time in a single web-based (Aviles & Eastman, 2012).
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First, I would like to give my biggest gratitude to my Almighty God Jesus Christ. First, I would also like to thank my supervisor Mr. Yustinus Calvin G. Mali, M. Hum., who is very dedicated to his job as an educator and researcher, I thank for his patience for helping me to complete this thesis. I would like to express my sincere thankfulness to the participants for their time and a significant contribution to this research. Second, I would thank my examiner, Mr. Dian Toar Y. G. Sumakul, M. A., a sincere thank you for the guidance and advice in completing my thesis. I believe that every comment, suggestions, and critics made for better understanding and improvement. Finally, I would like to thank all those who have helped me and even prayed for my success in finishing the last chapter of my university life at Satya Wacana Christian University.
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Wu, D., & Hiltz, R. S. (2004). Predicting learning from asynchronous online discussions. *JALN, 8* (2), 139-152.


APPENDIX 1

Dear respondents,

My name is Edy Hermawan. Currently, I am studying for my Bachelor Degree (S.Pd) in Faculty of Language and Arts in Satya Wacana Christian University Salatiga. As a part of my study, I am conducting a research entitled “Online Discussions in Enhancing Students’ Writing Skills in Writing for the Media classes”. Therefore, I would like to ask your assistance by answering the available questions in this questionnaire. I use those questions in order to get information about your perspectives on the use of online discussions in enhancing your English-writing skills in the Writing for the Media class.

It is not a test, so there are no correct or incorrect answers in this questionnaire. Besides, your answers will not affect your grade in Writing for the Media class. Thus, you are free to respond to how you really feel. If you have further questions dealing with this research, you may contact me through:

-WhatsApp : 0812 3854 9897
-Line id: hermawanedy

I really do appreciate your participation and your help in this research.
Below are the questions:

1. Can online discussions in your class enhance your writing skill?

   Please give some examples to support your answer!

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2. What are challenges of doing online discussions in your class?

Please give some examples to support your answer:

____________________________________________________________________
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Thank you!
APPENDIX 2

Interview Student 1
Date: March 22, 2018
Time: 09.48-09.54

Background questions:

- Apakah sudah ambil mata kuliah Writing for the media? Sudah
  a. Disemester? Tahun ke 2 semester satu.
  b. Apakah anda pernah melakukan online discussions? Misalnya line, WA, ataupun lewat schoology?

Iya Sudah. Sebenarnya lebih enak aja sih kalau lewat schoology dan lewat online discussions, karena dimanapun, kapanpun disetiap waktu kita bisa contact kedosen atau ketemen gitu, jadi ngak terikat waktu gitu.

(Flexible Learning)
1. Bisa dijelaskan, apakah online Online discussions bisa meningkatkan skill menulis anda?

Bisa.

- Aspek-aspek atau hal apa saja yang bisa meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda lewat online discussions?

Iya melalui online discussions kami dapat mengekspresikan apa yang kami ingin tulis dalam kolom komentar, jadi kami bisa bertanya apakah kami jelas atau tidak dan kami bisa memberikan feedback termasuk komentar-komentar kepada teman-teman secara bebas. Dan juga karena tidak ada grammar and spelling checker, siswa harus dengan sendirinya harus aware tentang kesalahan menulis mereka. Jadi dimanapun kapanpun kita bisa tanya-tanya dan kita ngak berasa malu karena kita ngak berasa ngak ada yang mengawasi dan kita berasa oklah tinggal ketik aja. Jadi, itu sangat membantu saya memperbaiki kesalahan-kesalahan kecil menulis saya.

(Increasing Students’ Awareness of Misspelled and Grammatical errors)
2. Jadi menurut anda, apakah online discussions benar-benar berdampak dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda?

Iya memang benar-benar berdampak. Jadi setelah menulis dalam online discussions dalam mengetik lalu saya kirim. Biasanya saya akan mengecek lagi apakah grammar saya benar atau salah itu, dan dosen juga akan mengoreksi, seperti itu. Dan tidak berasa malu, kalau kita merasa itu dinilai, kami akan merasa malu. Cuman dengan diawasi saja kita dilihat-lihat aspeknya apakah ada grammar yang salah, structure yang salah, spelling yang salah dan dikoreksi saja kami bisa dengan lebih bebas berkomentar.

- Bisa dijelaskan lagi perkembangan seperti apa yang anda alami!

Meliputi grammar, structure, vocabulary itu saja sih.

3. Apakah online discussions membantu anda menerima feedback yang lebih jelas? Misalnya dari dosen/ teman-teman yang terlibat didalam online discussions.

Iya karena tidak hanya dari satu sudut pandang, feedback tersebut jadi lebih jelas, jadi kami bisa melihat mana feedback yang benar dan mana feedback yang salah.
Jadi bisa dipilah-pilah gitu. Jadi misal ada teman yang merasa benar, cuman itu salah, kita bisa merevisi lagi.

- Biasanya meliputi saran apa saja yang anda terima dari peer feedback/ dari dosen disaat melakukan online discussions?

4. Menurut anda, apakah online discussions memberikan anda kebebasan/flexibilitas/ tanpa ada batasan waktu dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda?
  Iya, saya sangat merasa bahwa dalam online discussions, saya lebih merasa bebas dan tidak terkekang, seperti itu.

5. Menurut anda, apa saja yang menjadi kendala dalam melakukan online discussions? Apakah itu justru teman anda sendiri yang kurang aktif berkontribusi?
  Sebenarnya banyak sih faktornya, terkadang internet connections juga jadi masalah. Kalau misalnya ngak ada kuota, dan sedang tidak ada wifi, kami tidak bisa melihat komen-komen teman-teman yang dengan jelas. Dan juga teman-teman sangat berpengaruh, terkadang ada beberapa orang yang setelah kami publish apa yang kami harus publish, mereka tidak memberikan feedback, mereka tidak memberikan komentar dari mereka seperti itu. Cuman untungnya masih ada yang memberikan feedback, jadinya kami tetap bisa mengevaluasi apa yang ingin kami tulis dan untungnya seperti itu. Dan maslah untuk internet juga, memang itu jadi kendala cuman secara maksimal tetap bisa mencari-cari internet tetap bisa.

(Student's Passive Behaviors)
- Untuk menanggapi seputar teman-teman anda ya. Apakah lebih ke pasif atau lebih ke aktif?
  Kebanyakan teman ada yang aktif, cuman ada beberapa dari mereka ada yang kurang aktif atau tidak berkontribusi.

6. Jadi apa saja yang menjadi keuntungan dari online discussions?
  Menurut saya, lebih bebas, lebih tidak merasa terkekang dan waktupun lebih flexible.
Interview Student 2
Date: February 9, 2018
Time: 09.48-09.54

Background questions:
- Apakah sudah ambil mata kuliah Writing for the media? Sudah.
  a. Disemester? Saya ambil ditahun ke dua semester pertama.
1. Bisa dijelaskan, apakah online online discussions bisa meningkatkan skill menulis anda?
   Bisa, bisa karena dari online kita bisa dapat feedback dari orang lain.
- Aspek-aspek atau hal apa saja yang bisa meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda lewat online discussions?
   Misal kalu nulis, structure atau grammarnya salah atau vocabnya kurang pas biasanya bisa dibenerin oleh teman yang ada di online discussions.
2. Jadi menurut anda, apakah online discussions benar-benar berdampak dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda?
   Iya berdampak terutama dikelas writing for the media, karena walaupun tidak dilakukan secara langsung, kita masih bisa mendapatkan feedback dari orang lain lewat online discussions. Jadi ada perbedaan situasi menulis entah itu di online atau dikelas. Jadi itu sangat berdampak sekali dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis saya terutama jika salah spelling dan grammar. Biasanya saya juga akan mengecek kembali dengan kamus online, apakah spelling sama grammarnya benar atau tidak.
   (Increasing Students’ Awareness of Misspelled and Grammatical errors)
- Bisa dijelaskan lagi perkembangan seperti apa yang anda alami!
   Kadang grammar, kadang kalau nulis suka tidak memperhatikan grammar, kita bisa tahu grammar yang benar yang mana dalam online discussions, kadang juga vocabulray.
3. Apakah online discussions membantu anda menerima feedback yang lebih jelas? Misalnya dari dosen/ teman-teman yang terlibat didalam online discussions.
   Iya sangat membantu.
- Biasanya meliputi saran apa saja yang anda terima dari peer feedback/ dari dosen disaat melakukan online discussions?
   Biasanya mereka memberi masukan kata-kata baru atau pembenaran kalau grammar atau spellingnya salah. Missal dari sentence/ atau kalimat yang salah, mereka kasih kalimat baru atau ngasih saran atau juga ngurangin kalimat baru. Jadi itu bisa meningkatkan kemampuan menulis saya. (Increasing Students’ Awareness of Misspelled and Grammatical errors)
4. Menurut anda, apakah online online discussions memberikan anda kebebasan /flexibilitas/ tanpa ada batasan waktu dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda?
   Iya karena kan gak perlu ketemu langsung, jadi bisa kapan aja walaupun ada kegiatan lain kan masih bisa disambil, dari pada ketemu langsung, jadi waktunya gak fokus.
5. Menurut anda, apa saja yang menjadi kendala dalam melakukan online discussions? Apakah itu justru teman anda sendiri yang kurang aktif berkontribusi atau justru ke masalah teknis?
    Kadang temen sendiri, kadang internet, kadang kan mereka cuma wifi only, jadi mereka bisa bales komen kalau ada internet, kadang mereka juga sibuk sampai gak sempat mengecek hp. Jadi dua-duanya sih.
    • Bisa dijelaskan lagi contoh lain?
      Jadi biasanya kalau online discussions itu kesulitannya, misal teman-teman yang lain ada kesibukan, dia gak sempat untuk buka hp jadi ya gak bisa ikut dalam diskusi itu. Kalau gak mereka memang mungkin masih belum ada ide jadi mereka gak keluar didiskusi takutnya gak bisa ngasih komen.
6. Jadi apa saja yang menjadi keuntungan dari online discussions?
   Keuntungannya kita gak perlu ketemu kalau mau diskusi, jadi kita bisa diskusi dimanasaja, jadi lebih flexible.
Interview Student 3
Date: March 22, 2018
Time: 12.22-12.35

Background questions:

• Apakah sudah ambil mata kuliah Writing for the media? Sudah.
  a. Disemester? Tahun ke 2 semester satu lebih tepatnya.
  b. Apakah anda pernah melakukan online discussions? Misalnya line, WA, ataupun lewat schoology? Iya saya pernah.

  1. Bisa dijelaskan, apakah online Online discussions bisa meningkatkan skill menulis anda? Dari sisi positifnya sih….e….cukup membantu sih. Karena ketika kita udah keluar kelas lalu masih banyak yang belum paham, kita masih bisa tanya ke dosen tanpa harus membuat janji dulu, karena dosen kadang ngak ada dikantor. Tapi, sisi negatifnya, kadang penjelasan melalui media tu ngak seditail kalau kita ketemu sama orangnya langsung. Jadi kalau menurut saya, online discussions kurang effective sih sesungguhnya, karena akan ada ketidak adanya partisipasi didalam diskusi online, jadi pasti ada seseorang yang tidak perpartisipasi dalam diskusi.

(Students’ Passive Behaviors)

• Aspek-aspek atau hal apa saja yang bisa meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda lewat online discussions? Banyak sih ada grammar, dan spelling juga.

  2. Jadi menurut anda, apakah online discussions benar-benar berdampak dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda?
   Iya sih kak, tapi tidak terlalu yang specific banget.

  3. Apakah online discussions membantu anda menerima feedback yang lebih jelas?
   Misalnya dari dosen/ teman-teman yang terlibat didalam online discussions. Iya sih, cuman kadang mereka kurang memberi masukan yang masuk akal sih, jadi ya aku ngak terlalu pakai feedback mereka.

   • Biasanya meliputi saran apa saja yang anda terima dari peer feedback/ dari dosen disaat melakukan online discussions? Cuman grammar sih kak, kadang juga content, misalnya kurang pas aja gitu.

  4. Menurut anda, apakah online discussions memberikan anda kebebasan /flexibilitas/ tanpa ada batasan waktu dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis anda?
   Iya, sangat flexible karena kapanpun dimanapun kita bisa melakukan online discussions.

   • Meliputi apa saja yang menjadi keuntungan dari flexible learning lewat online discussions?

  5. Menurut anda, apa saja yang menjadi kendala dalam melakukan online discussions? Apakah itu justru teman anda sendiri yang kurang aktif berkontribusi?
Slow response, kek semisal dosen ngasih pemberitaan/ menanyakan sesuatu yang sebenarnya butuh respon cepat, tapi kadang murid ngak langsung bukak gitu. Sebaliknya juga gitu, kek murid menanyakan sesuatu melalui online, dosen sibuk lalu ngak bukak medianya juga bisa. Kurangnya di slowrespon sih kalau menurutku.

- Bisa dijelaskan lagi contoh lain?
Sama mungkin kurang jelas. Kalau pas nanya, kan kita denger dari orangnya langsung ngomong sama kita baca tu kadang persepsinya beda gitu.

6. Jadi apa saja yang menjadi keuntungan dari online discussions?
Lebih ke kelemahan online discussions sih, penjelasanya bener-bener cuma ada di online, kadang kan cuma...apa ya? Kayak penjelasannya tu cuma pointnya gitu, kek kamu harus buat ini itu, tapi ngak tahu detailnya. Menurutku yang memberatkan, karena kalau ada online discussion tu dosen ngak nge explain gitu lo, kalau pas dikelaskan mungkin bisa langsung dijelasin atau ketika kita ngak mudeng langsung dijelasin, tapi kalau di online discussion kurang detail.

- Bisa dijelaskan lebih lagi?
Jadi penjelasanya lebih detail di saat bertatap muka langsung.