

INCORPORATING SOCIAL MEDIA INTO ACADEMIC WRITING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

In higher education, academic writing is essential because it is extensively used in academic and professional communication. However, writing has been claimed to be difficult for students (Gibbons, 2002). Therefore, lecturers are challenged to find new ways and innovation to facilitate students' academic writing. Among those new ways is incorporating social media in academic writing class. It is triggered by the fact that nowadays the students are always connected with others using social media and they learn not only from their lecturers and peers but from their connection.

This paper aims to investigate the use of social media in students' writing processes. Qualitative research design was employed in this research. Data was obtained from three sources, namely interviews, students' reflective journal and students' texts. The findings revealed that the students made use of social networking tools in the process of writing. During the interaction, the students also obtained feedback on their academic writing.

Key words: academic writing, writing process, social media

1. Introduction

Writing skills play an important role for being successful in higher education. It is because writing is used extensively in much of academic and professional communication such as proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate. However, writing especially in English as a foreign language have been claimed to be difficult for students (Gibbons, 2002). This difficulty is influenced by students' lack of motivation to write. Kelly

and Nail (2002) estimated that up to 40 percent of students are not doing well in writing in upper grades; of that proportion, most have motivation and/or attention issues.

As an effort to overcome the problem above, there have been studies conducted to integrate the use of Social Networking Tools (SNT) in writing class. HalimandHisyam (2002) have been successful to use NICENET in order to improve students' writing skills. It is also stated that NICENET can improve students 'motivation in learning language. In addition, blog is also effective for teaching writing as it can improve students' interaction and reflection (Spiri and Blackstone, 2007).

Nowadays, the 21st century learners are connected via social media. Most social networking services allow the learners to share their opinions, interests, activities and events within their individual networks. The SNSs are web-based and they provide means for users to interact over the internet in various ways such as e-mail or instant messaging. Among various kinds of social networking services, Facebook and Twitter are widely used worldwide; MySpace and LinkedIn is the most widely used in North America; Friendster, RenRen and CY are well known in Asia; and in India, Orkut is the most famous one.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNSs are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view the pages and details provided by other users within the system. Ahmad (2011) believes that SNSs have evolved as a combination of personalized media experience within social context of participation. He makes a distinction between SNSs and other types of computer-mediated communications because in SNSs, profiles are publicly viewed, friends are publicly articulated, and comments are publicly visible.

Boyd and Ellison (2008) claimed that social networking sites not only allow individual to meet strangers, but also enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. They claim that on many of the large SNSs, users are not necessarily looking to meet new people; "instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network" (p. 210). In general, social networking services are developing in an amazing rapid pace and excellently connect the individuals. The implications of social networking services have developed in variety of areas and domains. Since social networking services have received and demonstrated such a good positive impacts, it is possible for us to discuss how they will work around education field.

This research is conducted by incorporating the model of Community of Inquiry in UET-Written class. The model explores four issues that have emerged from the research on social, cognitive and teaching presence in an online community of inquiry (Garrison, 2000). The research question addressed in this study is "How is the implementation of writing as a process incorporating social media?"

WEEK	TOPIC	ACTIVITIES	Data
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2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. This descriptive qualitative method aims to describe the design of teaching and learning activities through incorporating social media in academic writing process. In addition, students' writing improvement and their opinion toward the program were also discussed briefly.

2.2 Participants

The respondents of the study consisted of 58 students enrolled in *Use of English for Teaching: Written (UET: Written) Class, Faculty of Education, Universitas Siswa Bangsa International*. The class was divided into two sections (Section C & D) and the numbers of the students were distributed equally.

2.3 Instrument

In this study, the data were collected through observation, journal reflection, and interview. The observation was used to collect information about the implementation of the design. The journal reflection and interview were employed to gather students' experiences in academic writing process. In addition, students' writing was also analyzed to find out the improvement of students' writing.

2.4 Procedure of the Study

The program was conducted in six weeks. In the study, the students were required to find English teachers or experts to give feedback on their writing. They should find the English teachers, native speakers of English or experts in social media. The researcher collected the data started from the beginning of the semester. The following table is the procedure of the study.

Table 1 Procedure of the Study

Week 1	- Course Introduction and Assessment	- Lecturer gave introduction to the course	- Students' writing as Pre-test
Week 2	a. Research program explanation b. Qualified English teachers	<p>Research program :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform the timeline of the project - Tell the students to start finding an expert in Social Media and send the interaction record to the lecturer - Lecturer mentions the characteristics of qualified English teachers <p>Finding qualified English teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher decides whether the expert meets the qualification or not. 	- Students' conversation record with native speakers
Week 3	Explaining Expository Genre UET Request For Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecturer reviews students' prior knowledge on Expository Genre - In pairs, Students discuss the topic that they are going to write, the type of the text and the purpose of writing the text. - Students write the first draft of essay - Lecturer explains on how to make a polite request - Students continue having chat with people in Social media and ask for a request to give feedback on their writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first draft of essay - A request for giving feedback to their first draft of essay - Feedback from People in Social Media
Week 4	UET Writing responses to students' work	- Lecturer explains on how to give feedback to students' writing	- Peer feedback (a feedback given to friends and a feedback from

		- Teacher candidates give feedback to their friends' writing and upload it in Edmodo	their friends)
Week 5	Expressing Personal comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students revise the draft considering the feedback from native speakers from social media, friends and lecturer - After revising the draft, students then make self-correction - Lastly, the final draft is sent to media to be published. If it is failed, then students will publish it in their own personal blogs. 	- The revised draft
Week 6	Closing and Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students write comment to their classmate - Students write reflective journal about the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The screen print of the students' publication - Student's comments to their classmate' article. - Students' reflective journal

2.5 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data taken from observation, portfolio documents, and students' journal were analyzed and interpreted during the program. The data from interview and final essays were analyzed after the teaching program finished.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Description of the Course

This course aimed to equip teacher candidates with the English language skills for written communication in classroom and professional contexts. To prepare teacher candidates to use English in teaching, the course focused on the strategies and language forms for writing questions, directions, model texts and feedback comments to scaffold and assess learning in the teacher candidates' own classroom. Therefore, the teacher candidates were

well-equipped the discourse practices and language forms appropriate for writing to communicate with others for work-related purposes.

3.2 Teaching Writing Stages

To follow Tomkins (1990), writing process consisted of five stages. This included *Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing, and Publishing*. The focus of the instruction was to improve students' motivation in academic writing by framing assignments differently and giving students a "real" audience so that preparation can be made for their future writing as college students and professionals. In fact, the students are closely related to people in social media. Thus, the present study considers social media as a learning community so that students can have interaction for academic purpose.

3.2.1 Stage 1: Prewriting

Prewriting is the starting point in writing process and for most of the people this first step is considered as the most difficult. Murray, in Tomkins (1990), states that 70% or more of writing time should be spent in prewriting. That is because writers need to make a plan what they are going to write and they might have different types of preparation such as making detailed notes and a few written words (Harmer, 2004). Although there is no exact rule on what to prepare before starting to write, Harmer (2004), however, mentions there are three main issues that the writers have to think about, including purpose, audience and content structure.

This research was conducted following steps from Murray in Tomkins (1990). That is to help students formulate their ideas. The teacher instructed the students to discuss in pairs about the topic, purpose of writing, potential audience, an appropriate genre and generating ideas for writing. The lecturer let the students choose their own topic. From the discussion results, it was found out that the students mostly writing about current topics in education, such as National Examination and Curriculum 2013.

After the students had the topic, the lecturer then led them to think of the purpose of writing. Murray in Thomkins (2008) mentions several purposes of writing such as to entertain, to inform or to persuade the readers. It is believed that this purpose will influence other decisions such as types of text and potential audience. Most of the students set the objectives of their writing to inform and persuade the readers by providing facts and evidence.

In order to enrich their knowledge on the topic, the students then read some articles, discussed with their partner, made a chart and outline. In addition, in this stage the lecturer also gave review on Expository Text especially about the purpose and the generic structure of the text. As what has been stated by Harmer (2010) that sequencing the facts, ideas, or arguments is very important to be considered by the writers. Therefore, the lecture explained

briefly about the sequence of each text. This was also to remind the students of what they had learned when they were in high school.

3.2.2 Stage 2: Drafting

As discussed previously, in prewriting stage students were preparing their concept first. In the drafting stage, they started pouring their ideas down on paper. They did not pay attention to grammar, punctuation, spelling and other mechanical errors yet. Harmer (2004) calls this first version of a piece of writing as a draft and this is would be amended later.

Referring to the theory above, in this stage the students started writing their first draft using what they had formulated in the preceding stage. The drafting stage was done after the lecturer was sure that the students had found the concept for their writing regarding the topic, the purpose of writing, type of text and the potential audience.

Generally, students' writing talked about the current issues in education because they were English education students and had concern on that issue. The chosen topic actually became the positive point because the current issues would attract more readers. Besides, the students put the citation on their writings that becomes the requirements of academic writing. However, there were also some weaknesses of their writing such as unclear main ideas, lack of supporting details, illogical streams of thought, and inappropriate use of conjunction. The sample of student's writing can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Example of student's writing

Building Indonesian Characters through Education

The ministry of education will go ahead to implement the new national curriculum in July 2013. This changes trigger people with many criticism especially educators and experts. The new curriculum dropped science and English but focus on civics and religion as the subjects taught for primary school. Science and Technology will be integrated to both of the subjects because this new curriculum will emphasize on how to build the characters of the young learners in terms of discipline, deference, respect, tolerance, love, and the awareness of culture. As the need of multiculturalism and the appreciation of the culture, the role of English for young learner is excluded but Indonesian language and local language will be the core subjects for them. These changes ask all the part of the education field to move from the oldest curriculum and look forward because the future of the nation depends on the new curriculum.

Walsh (1990) defines education as process of preparing young learners for their social inheritance and advocates three dimation of education, they are development of knowledge, training of mental abilities, and development of mental character. One of the important matter is developing mental character. Now, the role of teachers becomes harder since primary schools no specification for each subject of teachers. All of the subjects will be handled by one teacher because primary students' learning do not fit into the subjects categorize. Besides that, the teacher should responsible to build the students' characters. This is what emphasize in the new curriculum that developing students' characters is important for them since primary students need a lot of guidances and examples of good characters from teachers and their environment. Teacher should

become the role model for students and taught aspects that is important for them such as respect, disciple and cultural identity. The age of primary school is fit to learn about those good aspects because they will aware of themselves and be proud of their identity. Beside, all the good things will embedded inside and seen in their behaviour till they become adults.

3.2.3 Stage 3: Revising

According to Harmer (2004), once writers have produced a draft, they then usually read through what they have written to see where it works and where it does not. Perhaps, the order of information is not clear. Perhaps the way something is written is ambiguous or confusing. They may then move paragraph around or write a new introduction. They may use a different form of words for a particular sentence.

In this research, the students get feedback not only from the lecturer, but also their peers, self-review and English teachers, native speakers of English or experts from social media. Among those feedbacks, however, the feedback from English teachers from social media was something new for the students. This idea is based on the fact the students nowadays are always connected with others using social media. Therefore, having written communication and asking for feedback from teachers in social media is claimed as the effective way to make the students enjoy the process of academic writing. The following figure depicts how the students asked for help from a university lecturer.



Figure 1: Students asking for help from a university lecturer

The idea above is in line with what has been stated by Small (1997) that developing life-long learners who are intrinsically motivated, display intellectual

curiosity, find learning enjoyable, and continue seeking knowledge after their formal instruction has ended has always been a major goal of education. One student, Dea (Pseudonym), stated that she was very motivated in doing this project since she could have interaction with native speaker teachers who have been teaching more than 5 years. In addition, the feedback that she got is also very helpful since the teacher could give her constructive feedback from different perspective. The example of the feedback is available in Appendix 1.

It is mentioned earlier that in this research students also had peer review and self-review. Prabayekti (2009) conducted a research on the contribution of peer review to students' self-development in EFL writing class and the result is most of the correction is only on grammar errors. In addition, Alamsyah (2012) conducted a research on teacher's feedback, and the result shows that the teacher uses various ways to give the feedback.

3.2.4 Stage 4: Editing

After revising their draft the students then proofread compositions to locate errors and also correct mechanical errors (Tompkins, 2008). In this stage, the students did self-correction to make sure that spelling and other mechanical errors can be anticipated. As the teachers in social media and peers mostly gave feedback on mechanics and grammar, the students were not necessary to make crucial changes.

3.2.5: Stage 5: Publishing

In this writing project, the students should publish writing in an appropriate form and shared finished writing with an appropriate audience (Thompkins: 1990). To motivate the students and make them proud of what they had done, they were assigned to send their article to media. From the interview, one of the students said that he sent his article about 'overcoming learning difficulties' to *StudentsGlobe*. In this case, the student made the right decision since the readers of the media are mostly young people. The other students also have tried to send their articles to other media such as *The Jakarta Post* and *Republika*. However, none of those articles could be published in media.

Even though the students were not able to publish their writing in a media, it did not mean that they were not able to share what they had written. The students then published their writing in their personal blog instead. Cequena (2013) conducted a research on the use of blogging in writing class and the students thought that it helps them to improve their writing ability. The following figure is the sample of student's blog.



Figure 2: A screenshot of student's blog

4. Conclusion

This paper investigated the use of social media in academic writing process. The results of the analysis revealed that the students obtained constructive feedback on their writing through interacting with English teachers, native speakers or experts in social media. This process made the students aware that writing is a process and during the process they need other people to give feedback on their writing. Nowadays, the students are easy to find experts or native speakers in social media.

The present study just explores the integration of social media in academic writing. Further study should be conducted to investigate students' writing development in a greater detail. Furthermore, the impact of social media on students' learning motivation might be the next agenda of inquiry.

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