THE EXPOSURE OF TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE WRITING: CASE STUDY OF SOPHOMORE OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF MUHAMMADIYAH PURWOREJO UNIVERSITY

Endah Lestari
Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Purworejo
Muhammadiyah University
lestariendah367@gmail.com

Abstract
The emergence of technology in the twentieth century has brought about different approaches to learn the English language. Myriad study shows that ubiquitous technology is prevalent and utilized in the classroom activity. This study is aimed to investigate the types of technology used by the students in the academic writing of sophomore Muhammadiyah Purworejo University, its implementation, problems, and solutions. A case study was utilized to portray the unique phenomenon of technology exposure. 50 students were involved in this study and to collect the data, the researcher used documentation, observation, questioners, and interviews. The study reveals that there are six technologies that are most frequently used to improve student writing ability, namely Bird Story, Grammarly, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Those applications are effective to develop their writing, encourage the students to be more active in writing, motivate them to write and make them easy to put their ideas into writing. In addition, those applications are more collaborative, beyond time and place. Meanwhile, the technology also brings issues such as difficult to reach, financial constraint, difficult signal, pre-paid requirement and has bullying among the students. The prominent applications have a positive influence on the students so it is better for the stakeholders to involve the technology into the curriculum, design, and learning process. Energizing autonomous learners to use those applications to be more independent learners to develop their writing is necessary. The specific technique should be done by the lecturers or students to avoid any bullying such as a close-class group.

Keywords: Technology, sophomore, case study, applications.

INTRODUCTION

English was today considered as the global lingua franca. It dominated in fields of international business, technology, science and academia (Roux., 2014, p. 45). For that reason, mastering English was an essential part of getting success in all aspects of life. One of its skills in writing. The writing was culturally specific, learned behaviors that were acquired only if someone was taught, much likes the ability to swim (Brown., 2004, p. 334). He made analogies of the difficulties of writing to those of swimming, for even though one might learn to swim and to write, this did not imply that the skill would be mastered, even if one was proficient in a language. Moreover, the writing was a complex, cognitive process that required sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time (Nunan., 1999, p. 273). It was a well-known fact that writing required the writer’s full attention and concentration (Farooq., Uzair-UI-Hassan., & Wahid., 2012, p. 185).
Implementing technology in the EFL context increases students’ confidence and encourages them to be EFL active learners (Chartrand 2004, pp. 24-26; Wu, Yen & Marek 2011, pp. 118–129; Mollaei & Riasati 2013, pp. 13-14). Therefore, EFL teachers are encouraged to incorporate technology into their teaching. However, according to Thang et al. (2010, pp. 400-416), the assumption that once the technology is introduced, the integration will follow next cannot be always true as students need to be trained and supported in integrating technology. Successful integration of technology into education, among other things, depends on the preparation of students.

Many researchers came to the consensus that technology could solve the problems faced in a writing class (You 2004, pp. 253-256; Degi 2005, pp. 12-13; San 2007, pp. 32-45; Darus, Ismail & Ismail 2008, pp. 77-91; Aydin & Yıldız 2014, pp. 22-24). Technology can act as a medium to improve teaching instruction and students’ achievement in writing. It supports learning, enhances students’ motivation to write, and promotes creativity. However, it is unfortunate that technology is not practiced in writing classes in Indonesia. The lack of interest, motivation, and difficulty in this skill are apparent among EFL students (Zandi et al. 2014, pp. 530-536).

A great number of researchers agreed upon the effectiveness of the use of technology in education and how it is beneficial in developing teaching methods and students’ achievement in language learning education (Frigaard 2002, p.57; Schofield & Davidson 2003, pp. 62-79; Haswani 2014, p. 7; Ghavifekr & Rosdy 2015, pp. 175-191). All these studies confirmed that various technologies from computers to the web increased the quality of students’ works. However, many Indonesia EFL teachers are still following the traditional model of teaching; and technology integration has no place in their teaching practice.

Many researchers believed that teaching and learning opportunities can be expanded through the appropriate application of technology (Akele 2013, pp. 100-107; Behzadi 2015, pp. 677-684; Ghavifekr & Rosdy 2015, pp. 175-191). Therefore, technology can lead to learning and development in learners’ different skills. As a focal point of every educational system, students are expected to be exposed to patterns and methods of learning which engage them and motivate them the most. It is in this sense that technology becomes imperative as a companion in education especially in learning and teaching of English language.

Realizing the fact that there was still a lack of study of integrating technology done in EFL context, especially in Muhammadiyah Purworejo University in sophomore students, hence, this study is aimed to investigate how integrating technology was used in promoting writing, the difficulties found, and the solutions. This study was expected to open new insight on the benefits of using integrating technology in general and writing in particular. It might help EFL curricula designers develop teaching materials using integrated technology which suited various way of teaching and match students’ level of achievement in English language in general and writing in particular.
METHOD

The study employed a case study method in which this method provided tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within a context. Merriam (1998, p. 19) defined a case study as a study that was applied to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. Additionally, the case study was defined as a study of a phenomenon in its real-world context which represented a unique case, deserving to be studied on its own right (Yin., 2011, p. 17).

Research subjects could be defined as research participants because research participants were the main subject of the study (Duff., 2008, p. 35). The subject of the study was chosen based on purposive sampling. The aim of purposive sampling was to select cases that were likely to be informant-rich with respect to the purposes of the study (Gall., Gall., & Borg., 2003, p. 165). Therefore, the research study purposely selected 50 students of a sophomore in the English Department of Muhammadiyah Purworejo University who involved in integrated technology and eagerly used the technologies in learning writing and investigated what they had experienced during the process of integrated technology implementation. The study would use those three kinds of data sources, namely informants, events, and documents. The informants were 50 students involved in the use of integrated technology. Events were in the form of learning activities in producing writing products. In this context, the documents collected by the researcher were writing products to gain valuable information about how the students’ writing products were improved.

To confirm the validity of the data, a check was needed to test the data and the data analysis. One of the techniques used in this research in checking the validity of the data was triangulation. There were two mains types of triangulation; by source and by methods (Ary., 2010, p. 499). Sources of data aimed to get data from different sources with the same technique (Creswell., 2010, p. 259). In the personal interview of this study, more than one informant was involved. Some different sources of information used in the study were intended to get the validity of the data. The researcher observed the document analysis and interview the same students to obtain the same outcome which was the key point of data credibility. The second technique used in this study was member checking. Member checking was a process in which the researcher asked one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account (Creswell., 2012, p. 259). At the end of the data collection period, the researcher asked participants to review and critique field notes for accuracy and meaning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students of a sophomore in Muhammadiyah Purworejo University learned academic writing that covered brainstorming, mind mapping, and main-idea list. Those were aimed to write descriptive text cohesively and coherently. The students were asked to find out the ideas by brainstorming activities and then arranged the ideas into a good paragraph. Besides, practicing in the classroom, the students were also urged to practice the writing outside the classroom. The students were encouraged to utilize certain technologies or online learning applications to develop their writing. Based on the questionaries, documents, and interviews there were some
types of technology used by the students to boost their writing and their experience through it.

**Table 1.** Frequent technology types used by sophomore to develop writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bird story</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>20 (40%)</td>
<td>20 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grammarly</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>45 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Facebook</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>23 (46%)</td>
<td>18 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Twitter</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>30 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. WhatsApp</td>
<td>20 (40%)</td>
<td>25 (50%)</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Instagram</td>
<td>20 (40%)</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that 20% of students always used bird story application. In this is an online application, students directly guided by application to develop the story and 40% of students sometimes used it. 10% of students sometimes used Grammarly applications that could help the students check their grammar, punctuation, and spelling. 9% of students always used Facebook and 46% of students sometimes used Facebook that is the most popular massive social media. There are 20% of students always used Twitter and 20% of students sometimes used it. 40% of students always used WhatsApp and 50% of students sometimes used it. WhatsApp is a private social media that can send a message, voice, and video. Finally, 40% of students always used Instagram and 30% of students sometimes used Instagram. Instagram is one of social networking that can upload and share pictures, short videos and comment on their interest.

Storybird is one of the free writing-related tools and resources available on the web (Walsh, 2010, p.34). Menezes. (2012, pp.88-89) said that Storybird embodies three ideas-- creating, reading, and sharing. It is also a collaborative storytelling tool that allows students to focus more on the content of their writing rather than drawing pictures. As stated by student (7) that “it helped me to keep away reluctant and shy to write on my own. it improved my writing ability and creativity in the imagination through a beautiful picture”. Even though the story bird is interesting but it is a pre-paid requirement so some students were reluctant to use it as a student (19) said: “actually story bird is good but it is complicated, we had to pay it”. Unluckily, the application needs a strong signal as stated by student (5),” Actually this application urged me to write from the simple one because it is very provoking to tell story based on the picture but it needs strong signal and expensive”.

To check grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary and to track whether the writer plagiarized or not, the online Grammarly tool can be optimized. Some students were interested in using this application because of being simple and effective. As a student (8) said:” Grammarly really helped me to check my spelling and punctuation when I wrote”. Grammarly also was chosen because it provides an explanation when the writer did as a student (34) said: Grammarly explained to me why it is wrong so that I could understand my mistake”. Even though Grammarly assists the student's composition but it can not correct or help the writing coherence and cohesiveness.

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites which allow users to post information, with others, and collaborate within the system (Stelter, 2008, p.
When students use Facebook as a tool for their study by spending time browsing profiles, meeting new people, and exploring relationships using the English language, they have greater opportunities to collaborate with a large number of people worldwide and learn the target language at the same time. “Facebook is popular and easy to be applied and I could write with a larger community that I have. So it encouraged me to write”, said student (20). Unfortunately, this social platform brings negative effects such as bullying as student (29) said:” When I was trying writing in English, some of my friends made fun of me and discouraged me”.

A considerable literature exists describing uses for Twitter in the classroom and the resulting impact on engagement, participation, success, writing and communication skills, community, learning, and memory. “Right now, Twitter is gaining popularity, besides, it gave me huge space to express anything that I wanted it also helped me as a beginner to write shortly, “ said student (24). Several studies suggest that Twitter activities improved student mood, engagement, and success, particularly if the assignment was a considerable share of the course grade and faculty participation was strong (Ebner, et al. 2010, p. 23). Meanwhile, the student (9) said that “ Using Twitter improved self-confidence because I used anonymity and avoid shyness when I made a mistake”.

WhatsApp helps to motivate the learners to improve their writing skills though it is considered the most difficult of the four language skills, and learners respond better when technology, especially the internet, is involved in their language learning. The application which is available on the mobile phones of almost all the students is a highly motivating tool for L2 learning. “This application is more comfortable than the others, it is because of being private and I could share my writing to my close friend who is very intimate”, said student (2). WhatsApp also can be used in group discussion, the students can communicate smoothly and discuss any topics that they want anytime and anywhere. As a student (12) said:” By discussion in the group via WhatsApp could correct each other and made fun. We also no need to get shy because we were close and understand that we had a commitment to study, besides we could discuss any topics and no longer need space and time”.

According to Listiani (2016; 4), Instagram is a fun quick way to share one’s life with her or his friends through a series of pictures, snap a photo with a mobile phone with a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever. As student (17) said,” Using Instagram extremely helped me when I was doing writing, I could comment on picture, made daily story and sometimes shared story with my friend”. In addition, according to Manampiring (2015; 2) Instagram is social media that focuses on photos and videos of short duration with caption compared to other social media that focuses on word, so that Instagram is easier to use and quickly become popular. This is in line with student (13) said,”Instagram is very popular and I did not need to write long, it is just short writing to comment something or to caption a picture. It was very helpful to the beginner”.

CONCLUSION

As far as the findings of the study are concerned about Indonesia integrating technology into English language teaching and learning is very much necessary.
Overall, using technology is very valuable to improve writing. This study reveals that learning accelerated using technology really helps the students to practice what they have learned in the classroom and can develop their writing ability. The technology encourages the students to do writing in private and group. The finding also shows that bullying can be avoided by a coordinated class by a lecturer to facilitate and guide the students. It is high time to revitalize English language education across the country through technology. As Hawkins (2002, p. 56) noted, it is time to collectively change our approach to the learning process, and particularly, take advantage of the power of technology to improve learning outcomes, enhance economic opportunities, foster greater creativity, and realize the dreams of disadvantaged youth in developing countries. Though most of the students do not use technology for learning purposes they bear positive impact that technology can be used for enhancing writing. Some recommendations are as follow:

1. To strengthen students’ digital literacy skills and knowledge, training on technology application in learning should be given to all students.
2. Language classrooms are to be furnished with internet connections and technologies like computers, interactive whiteboards, internet connectivity, TV and so on.
3. It is highly suggestive to manage cost-effective technologies with a view to reduce the expenses. It will enhance the smooth process of technology-mediated teaching/learning in education.
4. In schools, all knowledge is taught equally at the same time whereas knowledge can be customized according to the individuals’ interests and difficulty levels in using technology.
5. Coverage versus Knowledge Explosion. Knowledge is taught as coverage in schools where everything is being planned and set in different ways of delivery such as lectures, textbooks, and modules whereas the current technology has allowed learners to learn and find limitless knowledge independently.

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