Facebook Base Writing Learning for TEFL: A Case Study of ELT in Malang, Indonesia

Alfian Cahyo Budiardi, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia
Baity Anggrraeni, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

Abstract: Technology is something which cannot be avoided in our daily lives. It reaches many sectors of life; one of them is education especially in teaching writing. Recently, many teachers are still use a conventional method and approach to teach their students. On the other hands, students are familiar with Facebook. They use it almost every day in their spare time. There a lot of menu on it that usually used with its own function. So, it is important to create a new effective way in teaching by taking some advantages from the development of the technology especially Facebook.

This Facebook Base Writing Learning is a new innovation in teaching writing in which the teacher uses Facebook as the media in teaching it. The teacher applies it in Facebook’s group where the members of the group are the students of writing class who are taught by the teacher. The students are asked to post their works in that group and having a peer evaluation in that group to make it better. Then, the teacher asks them to revise their works based on the comments given by their friends.

In evaluating the students, the teacher is not only focus on the final result of the students’ works but also considering the students’ activities during in the classroom including the students’ participation and how the students’ develop their skills. Teacher is also giving materials in the class.

To apply this method and approach, teacher needs to make a group in Facebook and let their students join it. Then, students are playing their roles on this phase to develop their skills by having practices in the group which will be evaluated by peer evaluators with teacher’s guidance.

Keywords: FBWL, teaching, TEFL, writing

1. Introduction

Technology is not a taboo one in this globalization era and it has being a part of our daily lives. To solve a problem, we need communication and information to provide solutions to any problems. There is nothing wrong with the technology which has been widely applied in all formal and an informal institution. It has more effects in guiding people to solve their problem.

It inspires and leads people to make a new thing for certain purpose. People are helped by the technology to develop their old and ancient things. One of the results and the effects of the technology is Social Network. There are many kinds of social network in this world. To come up with, Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking sites (SNSs) as web-based services that have three main functions; (1) to make up a public profile within a ‘bounded system’, (2) to articulate a list of other users with whom they share connection,
and (3) to view and to traverse their lists connection made by others within their system. Some social networking sites are Friendster, Twitter, Linkedin, Facebook, and MySpace. Most users use social networks for several reasons; (1) business matters, (2) build interpersonal relation, (3) sharing information, and (4) learning. For the first reason, people may use it as a business media because by them we can communicate and interact with others so it is potentially inviting customers. It also provides a media for businessman to have coordination with their employees. It may also increase people’s relation. They may get a lot of new friends even finding their old friend because of the social media. The other reasons of using social media are to provide a media to share with others and also to learn and increase people’s knowledge. Although it seems that people access them for different needs, there is still one shared characteristic of social networks which is online interaction and communication between people by which most of the interaction is established through the written language. Another characteristic is proposed by Gross and Acquisti (2005) that the most common model of it is based on the presentation of the participant’s profile and the visualization of network based on relation to others. One of the favorite sites is Facebook. Facebook is a social media or people usually called it as social network. It is a site on internet which has capability to make people know each other by having their own profile by registering a private account. Facebook is firstly founded by Mark Zuckenberg eight years ago with his college roommates. It was firstly used as a media to make a network between his college’s students but some years after the launching, he initiated to make the network broader to many other universities and finally it is open for public. All of people may use it freely anywhere and anytime now.

Generally, technology is needed to provide an easy, efficient and innovative solution. It however reaches many sectors of live. People are difficult to avoid its effects. People will be left behind by others if do not follow the development of the technology. It can bring many advantages and changes to a certain aspect like education. For education, technology helps to make a new media, method, and approach in a certain subject.

In teaching English, there are many things taught to the student include the general knowledge about English and also the skill in using English. It needs a certain method and treatment to teach it in order to make the transformation of the knowledge can run well. One of the skills which is often considered as a difficult thing to be mastered is writing skill because we need to master other skills in English first such as listening, reading, and speaking. Writing combines all those skills to make it better. In Indonesia in which English is taught as a foreign language need a certain approach to teach it. By the development of the technology, it is important to make innovation in teaching it.
1.1 Phenomena

Nowadays, Facebook become a popular site around the world. Almost all of people in the world have Facebook account. Its users is not only adult people but also other levels of age like elementary students’, junior high school students’, senior high school students’, and college students’. Mostly, they use it as a media to communicate with it. They may send a message or chat with their relation without any limitation of time and place. They just need internet connection and a gadget to use it. It provides many menus for the users which make users comfortable and make them open their account every day. As a result, Facebook become a famous site in the world that almost all of the people use it every day and continue to growth rapidly.

Figure 1. Top 4 Facebook Countries Distribution
In this modern era, Facebook also become a trendsetter in the teenager’s lives. In Indonesia, they thought that people will be considered as a modern people if he or she has Facebook account. It seems that they have an “informal competition” to be the most up to date person by having a good, attractive, and colorful profile on their Facebook account and also being active on it. Indirectly, the “competition” will make teenagers are motivated to go on line and waste many times. Consequently, it may disturb their main activities because they are too concern on their Facebook. Based on a survey, people may stay on their computer or gadget at least four hours per day. It indicates that technology especially Facebook takes an important thing in people’s lives. From that fact, we can know that Facebook has influence for people lives. Facebook is one of the most accessed social networks in Indonesia. For instance, Socialbakers (2012) reports that Indonesia is the third biggest Facebook users in the world with its 45.523.750 users and increases by more than 4.231.720 users in the last six months in 2012.

Table above (figure 1) shows the statistical data on January 2012 about top four the biggest Facebook users in the world. Based on that data, Indonesia has very big numbers of users and it is indicated from the rank that is in second position with forty one point eight millions (41.8 millions) under United States of America with one hundred fifty seven point four millions.

On the other hands, the students’ interest in reading and studying is getting worst in line with the increasing of the number of social network users. Based on that condition, it is important to create a new innovative method and approach in teaching writing in a country in which English is taught as a foreign language.

2. Method and Discussion

2.1 Teaching Approach

In teaching English, there is a special treatment which is usually used by teacher in Indonesia in term of method and approach. TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) is a knowledge on the development of language teaching, particularly English, that of the activity done by teachers in order to meet the language teaching goals. In teaching writing, the teacher should concern in some cases like the spelling and the grammar or the text structure; consequently, there are a lot of teachers prefer to use grammar translation method principles to teach it. As we all know, grammar translation method is so emphasizing in the use of grammar that sometimes can make the students bored because they just facing many kinds of text or making a text and paragraph without any variation. Before starting practice to write any kinds of text, the teacher may deliver some materials related to the topic. That condition leads the class to the bored situation where the teacher tells the students about the materials more which is called as teacher centred. Absolutely, that method is not completely effective because the teacher will more focus on the result of the student without any consideration about the students’ development process.

In this modern era, it will be better that the teacher is not only look at the result of the study of the students but also the students’ development process itself so it will be very objective evaluation. Based on what psychology about motivation said that someone will be easier to receive a new thing on their mind if they feel comfort. Reviews to the phenomena, students are interested in social network and they waste many times for it. So, we need to come in their world to make the learning effective. The quotations below show how a learning process should be.
Tell me and I forget,
Teach me and I remember,
Involve me and I learn.
(Benjamin Franklin)

Ni ching ni wanci (you heard you forgot)
Ni khan ni siang (you saw you remembered)
Ni kunco ni cheto (you did you understood).

As Benjamin Franklin said above, it is stated that in the learning process, the teacher is not only need to tell and teach the student but also involving them in order to make them learn more. His statement is supported by Burner (1966:33) who said that learners are not only listening but also being active in learning process. It is clearly explain that in learning process students are not only being the object but also being the subject in the learning process to apply student centred approach.

2.2 The Use of ICT

In this transformative era, technology develops rapidly and make people’s lives are changing. They tend to use ICT in their daily lives. It is absolutely a reasonable thing for them because it helps people in doing their works. Machine which is one of the results of technology helps people in many aspects such as economy, social, and also education. Moreover, there are some people in modern society said that people are thought as a ancient people if they do not involve technology in their lives. As we all know and see that technology provides significant helps for people doing their works. Nowadays, they do not need to send a traditional letter via post office to have a communication with their relatives who are far away, but we just need to take our gadget to contact them. It could be via email or telephone which only needs a few seconds to operate it and absolutely it is cheaper than the traditional way. Those are commonly called as a virtual communication. As Rebecca (2010) said that recent developments in technology have enabled a new medium for communication which is known as computer-mediated-communication (CMC) or virtual communication. It provides people many things needed in their lives.

ICT becomes an important thing today by presenting its role in this digital era. All of things in people’s lives cannot be separated from the technology touch. Furthermore, virtual communication has become the norm for many organizations (Baltes, Dickson, Sherman, Bauer, & LaGanke, 2002; Bergiel, Bergiel, & Balsmeier, 2008; Hertel, Geister, & Konradt, 2005). From that statement, it means that the results of technology have been involved in almost organization or people group. It is matched to what Dewar (2006) said about the use of ICT in this world. He said that the reality of business today demands the use of virtual communication for at least some works, and many professionals will sit on a virtual team at some point. In addition, in regards of education aspect, Salmon (2000) says that CMC requires complex new skills on the part of teachers in relation to moderating and facilitating discussions in on-line learning environments. In his saying, it is clearly told that to have the CMC is not easy because it involves technology to support people’s lives. Consequently, they need to acquire a certain skill to operate it well. It is also explicitly explained that that skill is not just a simple one but also a complex skills which will play its role in facilitating
the learning process in virtual environment (internet) to make it more effective and efficient. In education nowadays, it has been applied some innovation in learning process by exploiting the technology especially internet such as the using of web blog as a media to provide the materials or by using a certain site like what Ifan Rizkha Auladi (2012) did that Kompasiana can be a media to teach writing. As your information, kompasiana is a journalist blog of Kompas which has then turned into the form of citizen journalism (Auladi, 2012). Those samples shows how nowadays the media in teaching is not limited and also not only focus on traditional ways such as the students should submit it in form of a printed writing product (hard copy) but also other new media which will help teachers in doing their responsibilities. Beside those kinds of innovation in teaching writing, there are hundreds more which are created to make the learning more effective. Definitely, teacher tends to use ICT to help them because a strong reason. They might believe that there are a lot of things can be taken from ICT to support the learning process. It refers to what Adam and Brindley (2007) said that Computer-based activities have been found to be motivating and to provide a strong focus for group activity (Hoyle et al. 1990; Scrimshaw 1993; Howe et al. 1996; Light and Littleton 1999; Littleton and Light 1999). That saying states that doing computer based activities can be a solution to improve students’ motivation because it takes their concerns so their focus will be at the activities. So, it needs to exploit ICT to get an innovation in teaching media so the students’ motivation will be better; consequently, their understanding and achievement will be better.

2.3 Facebook Utilization in Writing Class

Looking at recent condition that students are interested in internet utilization so much such as Social Network Sites (SNSs), it indirectly encourages us to innovate a new method and approach for teaching in a class especially for teaching English as a foreign language. Haman and Wilson in Munoz (2009) find that students who are engaged in a web-enhanced class might perform well than those students in a traditional lecture format. It is implied that we need an innovation in teaching methodologies in this globalization era when the technology has reached many sectors of life. There is no other option to develop the methodologies in line with the technology development. The students have accustomed to live side by side with technology in their lives. Consequently, Marc Prensky calls them as digital native students. He states that because they have grown up with digital technology, digital natives are more comfortable with it than the generations that did not. But this doesn’t mean they know everything about it or want to. Interpreting further from his statement, the students tend to use technology more than the previous generation like the teachers have. But not all of the students prefer for it. There are some types of students who do not like that kind of lifestyle because of their own principle or their personality.

Derives from those condition, Facebook can be a solution to make an innovation in the way of teaching English especially in writing class. In using it, we use one of the facilities in Facebook named group. By making a group, we can categorize the members of the group by ourselves so we can communicate only to whom we discuss. We can set the type of the group as a private or close group. However, we just need to invite them to the group so everything which is published in that group is only known by the members of the group. Consequently, the discussion in that group will be more focus and exclusive to the topic without any disturbs from other Facebook users.
In starting the teaching process, teacher may give some materials in the classroom as brainstorming for the students. It can be the way of organizing idea in a paragraph or even an essay and also the rules in academic or scientific writing. Next, by those materials, the teacher stimulates them to develop and enrich their knowledge about it and give them an assignment as reinforcement for students. In classroom activities, teacher may guide the students’ study process and create student centered approach. They should stimulate students to have independent learning and being active during the learning activities in the classroom. Teacher has an important role in this approach to direct and guide the students to avoid unexpected thing. Furthermore, students’ roles are started when they should do and finish their homework. In writing, they may be asked to make a paragraph even an essay. In doing that kinds of assignment, students should finish it before the deadline that has been agreed in the class. In this phase, Facebook has its roles. The students’ should post their works in the group of their class in Facebook. Then, they will have peer evaluation to their works. Every student has responsibilities to correct and evaluate their friends’ works. They do it by giving comments in every post which is made by their friends. The evaluation includes many criteria such as diction, grammar, text organization, and punctuation. Here, the active students can be considered as a psycho-motoric capability and being one of the indicators to give students’ final score because by this approach the teacher should concern more in the process. It is important because by this approach the students’ progress and efforts will be more appreciated than just judge it from a final test. Because in this approach we use students’ process oriented, it needs chronological order in doing the tasks. In the other words, the students have to think systematically so they will not find any difficulties in the process. Students are better to start their works by making a mind mapping first. It is meant to help students in organizing their ideas before expanding and writing it into a paragraph or an essay. Consequently, the students just need to develop a paragraph easily based on what they have arranged in mind mapping. In order to have a good essay, it is a must for each student to make a
good mind mapping. To realize it, peer evaluation is started from this step in the Facebook group. As the figure 2 shows us that from friends’ comments, students can revise their mind mapping to be better one. Moreover, it could also be a solution when they are lack of ideas to be developed. Their friends may have many interesting suggestions and ideas related to their topic so they can take and give each other to reach nearly perfect products of writing. In addition, teacher keeps guiding the students in having peer evaluations so the suggestion and the criticism which are given to their friends can be guaranteed as a correct one. These mechanisms are used for the next learning process such as arranging a paragraph until constructing a full essay.

2.4 Results

At the end of the semester, the assignment as the evaluation is used to measure the students’ ability. It needs to be taken because the teacher should know the improvement of the students’ ability. The final assessment will be compared to the students’ ability when they are still in the earlier of the semester. It requires also the students’ feedback about their feeling and opinions about learning process that they have had for about one semester. As a result, it can be in form of diagram or table so that teacher can make some improvements for the next opportunity. In this study, the class where one of the writers is involved, it is got that seventy five percent of students gives positive responses that they feels that they got improvements in writing skills and also the knowledge about it. Only a quarter of the respondent say that it is just an ordinary activity but still they argue that it leads them to increase their knowledge by providing an environment which make them easy to share each other and also access some references in internet. The problem occurred in applying this method is there are some students who got difficult to access internet because of their financial reason also the understanding of the rules in the beginning of the phase.

References


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