The Use of Blog to Enhance Students' Writing Motivation

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Abstract

The low of undergraduate students' writing motivation is one of the classic problems encountered in many universities around the world. This phenomenon can be observed from the frequency of text produced by university students in various levels. Teachers around the world had practiced many methods and strategies in hope that the students' writing motivation could be enhanced. However, this classic problem is still faced in the classroom today. It is interesting that the students who seldom to write in the classroom but are very active in writing in social media. The researcher then decided to investigate whether blog can enhance the students' writing motivation. 21 students were involved in this research. After observing the students' blog in almost 5 months and gathering information through open questionnaires, it has been concluded that blog could enhance the students' writing motivation but the lack of students' knowledge on how to operate the blog could be the reason why the students' writing motivation (in this research) enhancement occurred only in small degree.

Keywords: *writing motivation, blog, blogging difficulties, writing difficulties*.

1. Background

The low of undergraduate students' writing motivation is one of the classic problems encountered in many universities around the world. This phenomenon can be observed from the frequency of text produced by university students in various levels. The increase of plagiarism done by university students is also an undeniable fact, whereas, all students in all fields are required to have a good writing skill.

Methods and strategies are implemented by teachers and lecturers to increase students' writing motivation. Lectures evaluate, correct, and grade students' papers but most of time those corrections only gets little attention from the students (Lee, 2003). Peer feedback is also implemented by the lecturers or teachers but this method faces another problem. The students sometimes give wrong correction on their peers' paper because they are also lack of writing ability (Williams, 2005). Hong (2006) also mentioned the social irritation emerged by peer

feedback. Zainurrahman (2010) mentioned that if peer feedback is carefully planned, it can be a good choice in the writing classroom. For him, Hong's research was lack of preparation.

A unique fact observable nowadays is the students can spend their times and energy to access social media. They write and comment their friends' status on the social media and this is actually a reading and writing activity.

Some researchers (Stevans et al, 2008) accomplished a project named writingmatrix and in their report, it was said that the students' enthusiasm increased. This increase was emerged by the students' awareness that the writing activities in the social media have authentic readers and writers. This conclusion was also similar to Arena and Jefferson (2008).

Based on the thoughts, the researchers decided to project a research to investigate whether (or not) the use of blog (as a social media) enhance the students' writing motivation.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. Internal and External Motivation of Writing

Motivation is defined by Sage English Dictionary and Thesaurus as a psychological impulse to make someone does certain activity to gain or to reach certain purpose. In the other words, motivation can be reason underpinning certain action.

Based on the above definition, writing motivation can be defined as psychological impulses that make someone write, or choose writing as the mode to express or to communicate ideas. As a mode of communication, writing has different purposes ranging from psychological purpose (self-expression), cognitive purpose (learning), and social purpose (sharing) (Zainurrahman, 2011).

Given the purpose of writing mentioned above, we can classify writing motivation in two terms. Internally, psychological and cognitive purposes can motivate the students to write. Externally, it is social interaction that pushes students to write.

2.2. The Impact of Media towards Writing Activity

Media is one of the fundamental items in writing activity. Media meant here is certain protocol that makes written interaction possible. It is not the pen and paper that make written interaction possible, those are only instruments. A journalist relies on newspaper, a book writer relies on publisher, a researcher relies on the journal, etc. These are some media play important roles in written communication. Since writing is an indirect communication, the successfulness and failure of communication can be determined by the media used.

Some media are more effective than others. If a writer is aware that the media he or she is using is not effective, then the writing motivation is affected. This shows that media has certain

impact on writing activity. Social media has been used widely because it promises effectiveness and efficiency in written communication.

Through technology based media, the chance to collaborate among writers become easier than before (Urkuhart & McIver, 2005:44). This collaboration as interaction has been useful for correction and development of the text.

2.3. Using Blog as Writing Media

Today, writing process has been helped by internet network. This network bridges the writers to their purposes. Blog is one of the media provided through internet networking. This media gives chance to the writers to sort, to store, and to share their writings around the world. Other writers who read the text can comment or use the text for certain purposes. This kind of interaction shows as that the writers are actually interacting with human, not computer (Pinkman, 2005).

Pinkman (2005) got positive responses from the respondents. They stated that they enjoyed the writing activity by using blog or other kinds of social media. They also said that their writing ability improved because this media gave them chance to interact and collaborate with other writers and readers. This is also stated by Moon and Lim (2013) in their report.

However, every media has advantages and drawbacks. Using media like blog needs more time than the other classic media. The writers must understand how to use the media like computer and internet. Moreover, the development of technology always brings new knowledge to master. Therefore, sometimes, this kind of media is sometimes unavailable for certain writers.

The language of instruction used in the media is one of the problems. Mostly, the language used for instruction is English. Although today some media has translation feature, it does not mean that all writers are able to use it since not all languages are covered in the translation.

The last and the most important drawback is the need of the resource. Using media like blog needs more than computer but also the other resources like electricity and internet connection. The availability of these resources is sometimes reason for the writers to use blog as media. Therefore, good preparation and resource availability are two important things to be paid attention for the use of this media is about to success.

3. Method

This research is designed as a qualitative case study. This design is considered based on the research purpose: to explore factors caused by the use of blog as media which is assumed to have effect on the students' writing motivation. This is in line with Hancock and Algozzine (2006:8) that qualitative method tries to explore factors influencing a situation. Case study is also

appropriate for this research used various information sources to explore the use of blog as a single case (Gerring, 2007).

The researcher documented the students' blogging progress by looking at the articles amount posted by the students, the use of widgets, and interaction through the blog. Besides that, the researcher also distributed questionnaires. The first questionnaire was distributed to gain basic information about students' knowledge about blog. This questionnaire was distributed before the blogging process. The second questionnaire was given after blogging process. This questionnaire has given to gain information about students' responses about blogging. The questionnaires were adopted from Pinkman (2005) with some adjustments.

The data collected was analyzed by employing content. The students' blogs were seen from the progress those achieved. The blogs were scored as follow (the scores have no mathematical meaning):

Scores	Categories
0	Invalid URL
1-20	URL is valid but no article posted
21-40	There is one article but no widget
41-60	Article posted and there are widgets
61-80	Articles added and visitors increased
81-100	There are interactions within the blog

Data from the questionnaires were analyzed descriptively to see certain words, phrases, clauses containing information to be synthesized and concluded.

4. Finding and Discussion

The researcher inventoried 22 URLs but the checking process from May until September 2018 2 URLs are invalid. The data can be seen from the table below:

No	Scores	Categories	Month / URL				
			May	June	July	Aug	Sep
1	0	Invalid URL	3	2	2	2	2
2	1-20	URL is valid but no article posted	14	10	10	10	10
3	21-40	There is one article but no widget	2	1	1	1	1
4	41-60	Article posted and there are widgets	3	5	5	5	5

5	61-80	Articles added and visitors increased	0	2	2	2	2
6	81-100	There are interactions within the blog	0	2	2	2	2
		Total URLs	22	22	22	22	22

The table above shows that the students' articles increased (point 4, 5, and 6) from May to September. The invalid URL (point 1) decreased from 3 URLs to 2. This decrease is not significant because there are two URLs still invalid. The students started to post articles on their blog from the second month until the last month. From this table, it can be tentatively concluded that the students' writing motivation has increased. However, the increase seems to be gradual and personal. It means that the students' personal experience during blogging process differ from one to another. This insight was deepened through the look on the data from questionnaire.

The data from the questionnaire revealed that the students' slow writing motivation development through blogging was caused by their lack of understanding on how to use the blog. Their knowledge about how to use the blog was very low. The students might not be introduced or experienced the blogging activity before. Although they were aware that blog can be useful for sharing and interaction of ideas, this lack of understanding on how to use blog created certain difficulties. These difficulties in using blog indirectly blocked their writing motivation. In the process of this research, the students enjoyed the blogging activities. They said that they will keep blogging in the future.

5. Conclusion

Based on the brief discussion above, it can be seen that although the students deal with certain difficulties in using blog as writing medium, they enjoyed the activities and their writing motivation increased. The increase of their writing motivation is not collectively but rather individually and gradually. Their lack of understanding about how to use blog has been indirectly the reason of the slow increase of their writing motivation. However, since they enjoyed the blogging activities, time and experience could enhance their writing motivation.

It is recommended that the students should be introduced and habituated to use blog as one of their writing media. The next researcher who is interested in this topic should ensure that the students have enough experience and knowledge regarding the blogging activities. Since blogging is more than writing activity, it needs another fundamental knowledge like computer and networking. For blogging activities can face the difficulty related to technical issues, it cannot be merely concluded that blogging cannot improve the students' writing skill or motivation development.

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