

The Use of Social Media in Learning English Writing

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Abstract

As technology grows rapidly, social media has become one inseparable element of the daily life of modern society. Its impacts have spread into every aspect of human life, including education. The use of social media in teaching and learning activities has brought a new contribution to education, especially in language learning. Using social media, people from different countries can find it easier to communicate with each other to exchange or learn languages together, such as English. As a global language, English has four skills to be mastered to get to the proficiency level. They are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Among all the four skills, writing is considered to be the most complex one. As social media has brought much easiness and is very simple to use, utilizing social media to help the learning writing is considered to be helpful to help improve the effectiveness. Therefore, this article tried to uncover the use of social media in learning English writing.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English writing, social media.

A. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, learning English has been carried out since in elementary school. It has become a compulsory subject and a part of curriculum (Hasan, 2019). Throughout English learning process, practices are needed in developing vocabulary, speech writing and word identification (Ahmed, 2020). But in reality, in doing some practices students often experience difficulties that can prevent them from mastering English writing skill. Majid & Stapa mentioned that students who have learned languages for

more than 10 years at school are still often finding difficulties to write good essays in English. This is because in writing learning in class, students must communicate in one direction with the text and need to guess the reader's feedback. Therefore, some students are starting to look for other alternatives to study besides at schools, for example by using social media as a platform for them to practice their writing correctly (as cited in Wil et al., 2019). Because of its mandatory nature, students need adequate media in learning English, especially when they experience difficulties in learning, including in writing. The existence of social media among students can certainly be a solution to these difficulties.

Social media are the examples of the products of information and communication technology (Arif, 2019). According to Hudson, social media refer to websites and applications that are deliberately made to facilitate people to share content quickly, efficiently and real time (as cited in Handayani et al., 2020). As a form of technology used by most people around the world, social media used by variety of people ranging from children to adults. Zhu and Chen argued that social media have a profile base or content that is in one center and has four functions, namely: make people interconnected, allowing people to collaborate with each other, present identity or express creativity (Reinhardt, 2018). There are many impacts provided by social media, especially in terms of learning, including how to deliver information in the learning and teaching process, the way people share ideas, materials, news, and work together (Alshabeb & Almaqrn, 2017). They allow people to learn from anywhere, anytime with no limitations. Moreover, students tend to rely on social media to keep in touch with their friends. This opens up great opportunities for social media to support learning process. The form of social media themselves have three categories in general: (1) social networking site (SNS); (2) web sharing content and site settings, and; (3) content producing and editing websites (Faizi et al., 2013). Those variety of social media make students free to learn and understand foreign culture and language without having to be physically present in it.

Considering that the position of writing ability is important for students, there are several problems that may be faced. Among them are students having difficulty in exploring ideas for writing, finding partners who can provide corrections or feedback on their writing, or simply finding a comfortable place for them to write while still allowing them to interact with each other. Therefore, it is necessary to find solutions to these problems. Social media itself, although not created specifically for educational purposes, has drawn attention from some educators, especially in the field of teaching and learning English (Safitri, 2021). As evidence, several studies have been conducted to find out whether social media can be used in the process of learning English. Among these studies, one of them was conducted by Basoz who in his research concluded that social media provides a platform for students to support their learning process (as cited in Safitri, 2021). Not only that, another research conducted by Sharma stated that social media allows students to concentrate on learning the necessary language skills (as cited in Safitri, 2021).

B. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are platforms that facilitate any forms of activities that can be done via online such as creating and sharing information, exchange ideas, interests and thoughts. We can say that almost everyone can use social media. As the most widely used social networking sites in the world, social media give people access to keep in touch and share anything with other people (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). Social media are useful for people to be in touch with others and sharing information because it can reach more people than other sources. As a part of web 2.0 technologies, social media makes interaction among the users even easier, also simplify group formation and cooperation making (Hardiana, 2019). Those advantages provided by social media then make it much liked by users.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein, social media is “a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (as cited in Hardiana, 2019). The term ‘social media’ itself also can be defined as interest-based applications that adapt web 2.0 technology. Thus, they allow the users to create and share existing content as well as they have been connected to each other, either by using public or semi-public profiles (Chueinta, 2017). Social media in terms of online communities build interaction among people to share knowledge and information. Hence, besides create and organize their profiles, the social media users are also able to comment and share ideas with others. With the various features of social media, it is possible for the users to create content in different media types. Furthermore, they also can contribute, label, choose and assess the content, build communities through participation and feedback related to the same interests (Hardiana, 2019). In other words, social media are social-based technology products that can be used to share anything in various forms of media.

Social media are not only including web but also mobile technology. To access social media, the users can use various types of device such as computer, smartphone, tablet, etc. Any interactive activities that is possible to do with social media are communicate each other to increase social relations, share information and knowledge based on individual preferences in real life. Moreover, social media also refers to software in terms of social field that can be found in websites or other online communities forms, such as networking and micro-blogging. They are created by a large numbers of people to share personal messages, make conversations, exchange information and ideas, also develop social or professional contacts (Hardiana, 2019). Social media allow all sharing activities such as creation, involvement and distribution of ideas, thoughts or content in various forms of digital communication activities. To put it another way, social media is a medium for communities where people can interact virtually (Chueinta, 2017). Social media consist of various elements such as sender, receiver, content, and internet connection. One of the benefits of using social media is whenever the receiver sends feedback or comment about anything that posted by the sender, the sender can immediately know the receiver opinion about his/her message that has been sent. In conclusion, social media provide easy access

and become an ideal medium for online interaction, where the sender can get direct feedback from the recipient or the interlocutor.

C. TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Golden, social media tools are divided into two categories, namely those managed by companies or individuals (usually in the form of a web or blog), and those owned by third parties (such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn) (Golden, 2011). On the other side, Faizi, et.al., stated that there are seven types of the most popular social media used by people around the world as discussed below: (Faizi et al., 2013)

1. Social networking site (SNS)

Social networking site is an online community consisting of a group of people who have the same interests (Faizi et al., 2013). They can share their opinions, activities and experiences in the form of news, photos and videos. They also serve to establish interactions and socialize with others (Anwas et al., 2020). Social networks usually have the main features such as user profile, their social relations with other users and various additional features. Social networks also provide features for users to interact through online messages on the internet. As for examples of the most popular social networks are Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Viadeo.

2. Blog

Blogs are web-based journals used to share someone's writings, thoughts, ideas and opinions to be seen and read by others (Faizi et al., 2013). Blood said that blog was considered as an ideal room for the development and delivering expression because it had features consisting of links, commencions, opinions and essays. Moreover, they also considered as the first social media because at the beginning of its appearance in the late 1990s, they were designed to support interactive relationships between readers and embed multimedia in them (Reinhardt, 2018). Blogs are usually written by one person regarding certain topics that are updated regularly. The entry on the blog itself is displayed in the reverse chronological order. They can either be self-hosted or placed on popular blogging networks such as Blogger, Wordpress or Tumblr.

3. Micro-blog

Micro-blog is a micro version of a traditional blog. Micro blogging websites serve to share short text messages between users (Faizi et al., 2013). It also can be defined as the media used to socialize within certain limits (Anwas et al., 2020). Therefore, the micro blog is considered a mixture of blogging and social networking. An example of the most famous micro blogging services is Twitter.

4. Wiki

Wikis are websites developed together by the user community. Through wikis, users can add, change, repair and share information to be seen by others (Faizi et al., 2013). Warschauer & Grimes argue that there are differences between blogs and wikis. Blogs tend to highlight the presentation both self, voice and work individually, while

the wikis lead to writing and is collaboratively distributed. Thus, social networking sites (SNS) and wikis focus on sharing and building networks, which means there is interaction in it. While the blog itself only focuses on promotions and does not really need interaction or cooperation in it (Reinhardt, 2018). To put it in another way, wikis contain posts written, modified and uploaded by users who have access to the web. The biggest and most popular wiki is Wikipedia.

5. Social bookmarking websites

Social bookmarking websites allow users to mark their favorite links and share them with other users. This bookmark is usually grouped by a particular topic and can be saved for personal, shared with certain groups or in public (Faizi et al., 2013). They give the group of content a title and a label that describes the content to make it easier for other users to find it. Social bookmarking sites will suggest content that has similarities to website links or images that users have saved before (Triyana, 2018). Thus, it can be concluded that social bookmarking websites are places where the users can collect and store any forms of content, give them labels and set them for private or public access. Some examples of social bookmarking websites are Delicious, Digg, Reddit, and Stumbleupon.

6. Media sharing sites

Media sharing sites allow users to upload and share multimedia contents in the form of photos, videos or audio via the web (Hariyanti & W., 2018). Moreover, each user can view files uploaded by other users and group them through tags, share thoughts and opinions through the comments column (Faizi et al., 2013). Therefore, besides providing places to share multimedia among the users, media sharing sites also allowing the users to customize the multimedia they shared according to their own preferences. Some of popular media sharing sites today are YouTube, Flickr, and Slideshare.

7. RSS (Really Simple Syndication)

RSS is a common component of social media sites. RSS distribute content from websites and blogs which are then shared in the form of feeds to different users (Faizi et al., 2013). The presence of RSS makes it easy for users to be able to subscribe for free to many feeds at once, instead of visiting it regularly and separately. By subscribing to certain content sources on RSS, users can follow the latest emerging trends according to personalization settings (Amarin & K., 2019). Thus, RSS are useful to spread the latest and personalized information to their users. As for examples from RSS is Google Reader.

With the various types of social media, users can freely choose the platform based on their needs. Social media enable their users to communicate both through spoken and written words directly (synchronous) or indirectly (asynchronous) (Anwas et al., 2020). Some of these social media are using foreign language, especially English as an international language. Most likely language learners will be more affected by social media in line with its abilities to provide the learners another medium to make friends

and also an interesting way to release pressure (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). In addition, the use of social media also makes it easier for students to access content anytime and anywhere. In other words, the difficulty in following learning instructions can be minimalized (Ahmed, 2020). This illustrates how potential social media is to help students learn English, especially outside the classroom.

D. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Most of undergraduate students around the world are using social media nowadays (Hardiana, 2019). Social media plays an important role in education field because it provides various platforms to support and motivate students to learn. Hence, the usage of social media is expected to give any solutions for various problems in learning process, especially if the students can share their difficulties with other students who have the same problems (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). Some interesting features of social media such as illustration, animation, different material structuring and improved control make well-designed social media preferably by students than traditional learning method (Chueinta, 2017). Social media are present not only as a medium of communication and socializing but is now also transformed as a tool to help students in learning.

Social media takes an important role in English language learning since it enables students to improve their abilities in English such as writing, reading and improving their vocabulary. One of the advantages of using social media in learning English is minimalizing shyness as well as making communication through verbal both directly and indirectly easier (Anwas et al., 2020). Social media also increase students' self-learning skill. There were 69% of students worldwide stating that learning felt more effective when accompanied by socializing informally (Dhanya, 2016). In increasing English self-learning skill, social media support students to learn English efficiently and effectively. One of the reasons why teachers should use social media in teaching English is because students rely on it to be able to socialize and access information. Al Arif said that social media provide opportunities for students to improve their English skills. This is because in social media there are fun learning resources that can increase students' interest in learning English (Arif, 2019). Hence, social media have a great opportunity in helping students to learn English effectively. They are not only help students to master English quickly through various methods but also make students excited to learn with a new medium that could motivate them for a certain time.

E. LEARNING WRITING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Writing has been identified by Harmer as a basic language skill and is as important as reading, speaking and listening, so it will not be ignored in the language learning process. Writing also is a disciplined way to create meaning and an effective way to show someone's thoughts (as cited in Bukhari, 2016). According to Kroma, is a type of writing in which the writer expresses his thoughts in his head, consisting of an array of words to form an essay (as cited in Salikin & Tahir, 2017). Students describe in writing something that is a concrete physical form or space that is important to

vision. However, developing a particular skill requires consistent effort and regular practice. Since writing means creating or duplicating a message spoken in the written language, it involves an active process for organizing, formulating, and developing ideas on paper so that readers can know and understand the author's message (Salikin & Tahir, 2017). Students need to be aware of writing as a process and also as a product, as it reflects the student's ability to master writing techniques (Okasha & Hamdi, 2014). In addition to learning vocabulary and grammar rules, through social media students can also improve their English writing skills with online writing methods. The writing rules contained on social media are informal, so they do not demand users to have perfect expertise in English. Social media features that provide certain limits regarding the number of words that can be written in each post make students summarize their writing and ensure it can be well understood at the same time.

According to Suyono and Hariyanto, learning is a process to obtain knowledge, develop skills, and improve the behavior of students (as cited in Handayani et al., 2020). Additionally, Brown stated that learning is when someone gets knowledge, skills, experiences or instructions on certain subjects (as cited in Handayani et al., 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that learning English writing is a process carried out by students and aimed to gain, improve or develop his/her knowledge and skills in writing field. In addition, writing skills mastery in the context of learning English is important because through it students can express their ideas, thoughts, emotions and feelings to others in writing. Writing is considered as a difficult thing to do for students. This problem can be overcome by creating a strategy that can improve students' writing skills. The strategy can be represented through controlled exercises and activities that reflect real life (Sakkir et al., 2016). These two things, apart from being able to be done in the classroom, can also be done through social media. The writing rules contained on social media are informal, so they do not demand the users to have perfect expertise in English. In addition to learning vocabulary and grammar rules, through social media students can also improve their English writing skills with online writing methods.

Tamer Mohammad Al-Jarrah, Jarrah Mohammad Al-Jarrah, Rania Hassan Talafhah and Noraïen Mansor (2019) examines how students perceive social media in terms of ease of use, usefulness, and attitudes towards engaging in activities using social media, and whether these factors correlate. Based on the research findings, a high percentage of students use social media. The researchers found that the role of social media in the development of English writing performance at the school level was dominant. The role of social media in the development of English help English learners learn new words and phrases and improve their writing skills.

Khan et al. (2016) claims that the role of social media in English vocabulary development at the university level is dominant. The role of social media in developing English vocabulary seems to be the brilliance of the day as social media make it easier for English learners to learn new words and phrases and improve their vocabulary. Similarly, the results of the study also show that young college-level

learners find social media are easier to use than books and other text materials while going to the library to get vocabulary development books.

Anwas et al. (2020) suggest that students need to be encouraged to improve their English proficiency by using English social media content. It is known that there is a significant correlation between the use of social media content and English proficiency. Therefore, it is essential to use social media to learn English. The types of social media are very diverse. Similarly, content and other facilities can attract millennials as a place to practice, practice, and become accustomed to learning English. Meanwhile, Chueinta (2017) states that: participants mainly used social media to improve their English proficiency because social media is convenient for regular use,

Hardiana (2019) propose that use of social media among English Education students mostly give positive effect for them to solve problems in completing their theses. In this study, the writer found various factors in dealing with students to complete their theses such as; psychological factor (less motivated), socio-cultural factor (the relationship between students and supervisor), linguistic factor (finding references, insufficient of grammar). The use of social media in solving these problems have made students feel easier in overcoming the various factors they get in writing a thesis.

F. CONCLUSION

Social media are platforms that facilitate any forms of activities that can be done via online such as creating and sharing information, exchange ideas, interests and thoughts. There are seven types of the most popular social media, namely: SNS, blog, micro-blog, wiki, social bookmarking websites, media sharing sites, and RSS (Really Simple Syndication). In education, social media has brought improvement in learning, such as increasing students' engagement in learning by providing various platforms and fun learning sources, minimalizing shyness, and increasing students' self-learning skills. In the EFL context, researchers has proven that social media has brought more usefulness or positive effects into learning than negative ones (lackness).

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