Improving Students' Writing Ability Through Blog-Based Peer Response

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Abstrak

Penggunaan teknologi dalam dunia pendidikan memiliki peran penting untuk membuat mahasiswa tertarik untuk belajar menulis dalam bahasa Inggris. Artikel ini menjelaskan bagaimana penilaian sejawat berbasis blog dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mahasiswa. Blog merupakan media yang menarik untuk berbagi hasil tulisan mahasiswa. Tidak hanya menggunakan blog, tetapi juga menggunakan penilaian sejawat yang merupakan cara untuk memberikan komentar terhadap tulisan mahasiswa oleh teman-temannya sehingga dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mahasiswa. Artikel ini menggunakan tinjauan literatur terhadap penelitian-penelitian yang relevan mengenai penilaian sejawat berbasis blog yang terdapat dalam artikel, buku, dan sumber-sumber lainnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penilaian sejawat berbasis blog dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mahasiswa karena cara ini sangat menarik dan bermakna bagi mahasiswa. Cara ini juga merupakan cerminan dari pembelajar abad ke-21 yang menggunakan teknologi untuk mendapatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan terutama dalam belajar bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: *Blog, Penilaian Sejawat, Penilaian Sejawat Berbasis Blog, Menulis.*

Abstract

Using technology in education has an important role in making students interested in learning writing in English. This article promotes how blog-based peer response improves students' writing ability. A blog is an interesting media that can share students' writing. Not only using a blog but also using peer response is a way to give comments on students' writing by their friends that can improve their writing. This article used a literature review of relevant studies about blog-based peer responses in the articles, books, and other sources. The finding showed that blog-based peer response can improve students' writing because it is very interesting for them and meaningful for their writing ability. This way is also a reflection of 21st-century learners who use technology to gain knowledge and skills, especially in learning English.

Keywords: *Blog, Peer Response, Blog-Based Peer Response, Writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a productive skill in English that should be mastered by university students, especially for students in English department. As a productive skill, they need to organize what is in their mind to write it well that can be understood by readers. According to (Wardle & Downs, 2017), writing is not just about write what comes in our mind, but we need to express it into good form, well organized, through process, and effectively address the issues of the moment (rhetoric) that

makes our reader get the ideas smoothly. In addition, (Ghofur et al., 2019) define that writing involves both of process of producing new ideas and analyzing various word choices. In other words, writing is a process of organize ideas that tranfers to print form by sharping main ideas, giving well structure, and coherent organization into its work. Moreover, (Johnson, 2016) states that writing is a process; a complex process so that it cannot be produced in one setting but it occurs over time. Therefore, process of writing needs much time to study and practice about what ideas that someone will develop in his/ her writing so that it helps people to convey meaning and enable people to understand the content of the communicating messages successfully. The more someone practices writing, the better he/ she will write (Lagan in Tuan, 2010). Since writing is a process, the students should review and revise their writing continuously until they produce a good quality of writing.

As discussed earlier, writing is the most important skills that must be mastered particularly for English department students because they must be able to write their thesis by their own words. Meanwhile, writing helps the writer refine his/ her ideas when he/ she gets feedback from the others. It means when the students write something such as a paragraph or essay, they will get some comments from others about their writing, and it makes their writing will be better than before.

Since writing is a productive skill in English, it is often considered as the most difficult language skill to be learnt since its complexity makes it becomes difficult. Not only difficult in linguistic competence, but also writing involves cognitive and creativity process. In cognitive process of writing, it is a process of transaction between writer's schemes which consisted of variety of information. Furthermore, there are many reasons why writing is regarded difficult skill. (Huy, 2015) found that there are some problems in learning writing skill. First, students have is lacking of vocabulary. It is the biggest problem that most students usually have when they study writing skill. Second, students have difficulties in studying grammar. Third, the topic of writing is difficult for students. Fourth, teacher does not have enough time to correct students' writing. Fifth, students lack material sources to improve their writing skill. Sixth, students lack time for learning writing skill. It can be concluded that writing is the most difficult skill for students because it requires rich of vocabulary, good grammar, wide knowledge, much time, and need a correction from someone who has good ability in writing. Thus, to be a good writer, the students give much efforts of this skill.

Realizing the difficulties of writing in English, there are some cases found in writing especially in university. First, students' motivation in writing is still low. They said that writing is difficult skill for them so that they have lack of motivation in writing, and practicing it regularly. Second, students are difficult to express their ideas through writing because they do not have enough knowledge to write other words, ideas, and facts. Third, they face difficulties in language problems such as lack of vocabulary, bad grammar, inappropriate of diction, difficulty with spelling, punctuation, and meanings. In addition, time is limited for writing. The students only study writing once in a week. They have only one chance to complete their writing assignments without any opportunity to do revision. They collect their

assignment, and then the lecturers give them score. For most people, the writing process needs lengthier time and involves several steps before a finished one is produced. It is supported by Chandrasegaran in (Tuan, 2010) indicates that a problem to be expected in the writing classroom is that some students take much longer than others to write the required parts of writing, especially essay. Thus, many students never complete their writing in the classroom. Besides, writing lecturers still use conventional way in teaching writing. For example, the lecturers explain about the theory, and then they ask students to write their writing by using paper-based assignment without using other media like email, or blog, as a tool for students to share their writing. Then, they seldom ask the students to comment their writing with the other students. If they have done it, they tend to commit class response towards students' writing. Sometimes, the lecturers ask them to revise their writing by themselves or in group.

To overcome the phenomenon above, peer response is an effective way to enhance students' writing ability. Students can learn from other students when they share their writing, and then they receive some responses from their peers/ instructor. According to Liu and Hansen in (Ho & Usaha, 2011), peer response helps students improve their writing quality and provides them with the opportunities to test their knowledge and learn from one another. It means that peer response can help students to enhance their writing ability through receiving comments from the other students. Then, still Liu and Hansen as quoted by (Ho & Usaha, 2011) add that peer response activities help students formulate the topic that will be discussed in their writing more clearly, add details to their writing, discover their own most frequent errors, and learn new vocabulary, organizational patterns, and grammatical structures from each other. It means peer response is a good technique for students to enhance their writing ability.

Computer-Mediated Communication (here after CMC) is one of modes of peer response that using computers in human communication, especially blog. According to (Vendityaningtyas & Styati, 2018), there are two types of CMC; they are asynchronously (delayed time frame) and synchronously (real time). By using CMC through synchronously, peer can respond the writing paper online at the time. CMC for peer response by using blog has some benefits such as; students can exchange their ideas and respond to each other through computers online anywhere, anytime; e-peer response is able to increase students' participation and encourages them to spend more time and energy on their tasks, especially writing essay; and it makes students more relaxing in giving comments because they do not face each other.

According to Warschauer in (Ho & Usaha, 2011), CMC allows students to take more active and autonomous roles when seeking feedback since they can ask questions whenever they wish and take the initiative in discussions. It means that CMC encourages students to take more participation in writing discussion. Moreover, (Nowrozi, 2011) states that pedagogical benefits of CMC in language learning such as; encourage motivation and learner autonomy, create opportunities to participate, and increase interactive communication.

Then, CMC for peer response by using blog has been able to make peer response more effective for students. Meanwhile, by using blog-based peer

response, students can share their writing, and invite some of their friends to give some comments towards their writing, so that they can improve their writing quality. It is supported by Pham & Usaha (2016) that blog-based peer response helps students to enhance their writing quality and they have positive attitudes towards this technique. Dealing with those, this article promotes the way to enhance students' writing ability through blog-based peer response.

METHOD

A qualitative research design was applied in this reserach. Qualitative research involves an in-depth exploration and understanding of phenomena within their natural settings. It relies on non-numerical data to comprehend social, cultural, and human aspects deeply. It often employ interviews, observations, and analysis of texts or artifacts to derive rich insights and understandings of the complexities and nuances within a given context. This approach emphasizes subjective interpretation, seeking to uncover meanings, patterns, and relationships to generate theories or understand experiences from the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The aim of this research is to propose that blog-based peer response can improve students' writing ability. This study focused on library research, the data were collected through reading and reviewing several journal articles and books that are relevant to the blog-based peer response to improve students' writing ability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Peer Response in Writing

Peer response in writing is students give some comments on other students' writing to help them revising and improving their writing. Peer response, also known as peer feedback, or peer review, or peer editing, is the use of learners as sources of information and interaction for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral format in the process of writing. Then, Nelson, Murphy, and Paulus as quoted by Kitchakarn (2012) define peer response is a pedagogical cooperative learning technique commonly associated with teaching of writing using the process strategy, in which students provide feedback on their friends' written drafts, receiving the comments to improve their own writing in return.

In addition, Liu, and Hansen in Kitchakarn (2012) argue that peer response is the way of interaction between students to share or exchange information with each other. Peer comments from revision can be used to develop vocabulary, organization, and content of writing.

Generally, peer response has four modes that are available for lecturers to choose as follows: first, oral mode is peers read the writing paper and then orally give comments. Second, written mode is peers read the writing paper and write comments to give back to the writer. Third, written plus oral is peers read the writing paper and write comments and then orally discuss the comments with the writer. Fourth, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is a method of using computers in human communication. Peers read the writing paper on-line and

respond it either asynchronously (delayed time frame) or synchronously (real time) (Vendityaningtyas & Styati, 2018).

Based on some definitions above, peer response allows the students to give their comments on the others' writing, and it encourages the students to revise and improve their writing. In peer response, there are four modes that can be done by students, they are: oral, written, oral plus written, and e-peer response (CMC).

Blog

Blogs are fast becoming a popular new medium for teaching and learning English and several studies have indicated that they can help with motivation, social interaction, and reflective learning. Using blogs, students can practice their writing skills and engage in peer feedback and correction through blog commentary. There are some definitions of blog by some experts. First, from Boas in (Kitchakarn, 2013), the term blog is a blend of two words: web and log; it is a web page with regular diary or journal entries that incorporates different postings by authors and responses to these posts by an audience. Then, Galien and Bowcher in (Kitchakarn, 2013) define blog is a new medium or tool for written communication and interaction in many different languages around the world.

Another definition is offered by Mynard in (Kitchakarn, 2013) who states that blog is an influential and effective tool for language teachers to encourage students to communicate or reflect their ideas on their learning experience and add their response to their peers' blogs to encourage further expression. Furthermore, (Juniari et al., 2022) states that blog is private online diary to publicly express someone's ideas, feelings, thoughts, experiences through software that enables one to easily do so.

Based on some definitions above, it can be concluded that blog is an online personal journal that used by someone to share their writings and responded by the readers. By using blog, students can enhance their writing skill because it encourages students to express their ideas and knowledge, and give their response to their peers' blog.

According to (Lee, 2011), there are three types of blogs commonly used in the language classroom; they are personal blog, class blog, and project blog. First, personal blog comprise compilations of internet-based diaries that encourage individuals to express themselves and self-reflection. This blog is created and run by an individual student. The students can post their thoughts related to their reading. They also use free form templates of the blog as journals for writing practice so that they get experience with the practical, legal, and ethical issues of creating a hypertext document. It means that this blog is suitable for reading and writing classes.

Second, a class blog is used to open a social place where both lecturer and their students shared and exchanged cross-cultural perspectives using teacher-assigned topics. This blog is created and run by the lecturer for students, and it has several purposes for examples, the lecturers can deliver daily reading practice, syllabus or information to their students; and the students or the lecturers can explore English websites.

Third, project blog is used for the lecturers to share the topic that is discussed and debated by the students. It gives them freedom in decision-making and in expressing their ideas, opinions, thoughts, experiences, personal choice and so forth. The blog has feature of leave comment, post messages, images and link so that the students can work collaboratively by using this blog because it can encourage students' participation to post messages, images, and links related to classroom discussion topics.

The lecturers can choose what type of blog that they use to share their students' writing and give comment each other. Therefore, they ask their students to create their blog and invite the other members of group to their blog to give comments and responds to their writing.

Blog-Based Peer Response

Ho & Usaha (2011) states that blog-based peer response refers to activities in which peers provide and receive comments via a blog. It means that blog-based peer response is a tool for online discussion by using blog where the students provide and receive some comments for their writing from their peers. Thus, blog-based peer response helps the students to enhance their writing quality from their peers.

How to Apply Blog-Based Peer Response in Writing

This article adopts and modifies "writing cycle" that proposed by (Ho & Usaha, 2011). There are some stages how to apply blog-based peer response to enhance students' writing ability.

1) Brainstorming: Pre-writing. Students explore possible topics, choose a topic, and they generate ideas to prepare for their writing.
2) Drafting. Students write their first draft by putting ideas down on the blog.
3) Peers comment on the first draft. Peers give their comments by using peer response sheet. On the first draft, peers focus to give their comment on content and organization of writing.
4) Revision of first draft to the second draft on the blog. Students revise their first draft based on comments from peers. After they revise their first draft, they put their second draft on the blog again.
5) Peers comment on the second draft. Peers give comment on the second draft that focus on grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics.
6) Revision of second draft to the third draft. Students revise their second draft based on comments from peers. After they revise their second draft, they put their third draft on the blog again.
7) Lecturer's comments and instructor's comments. In this third draft, lecturer or instructor gives comment to students' writing that focus on content and organization, grammar, sentence structure, mechanics, and form.
8) Writing final copy. Finally, students write their final copy of their writing after getting comments from peers and lecturer/instructor.

The Advantages of Blog-Based Peer Response in Writing

There are many advantages of using blogs as a writing tool that offered by some experts. First, Aljamah in Kitchakarn (2013) states that weblogs can motivate students to write more, they can write both academic and nonacademic. When

using blogs, students can get feedback from other audiences; they have an opportunity to read things in which they are interested and write things they really want to.

Second, Mynard in (Kitchakarn, 2012) argues that blog is a powerful tool for language instructors to encourage students to express or reflect their ideas on their learning experience and add their comments to their friends' blogs to encourage further reflection. In addition, Galien & Bowcher as quoted by assert that using the blogs provides students an additional as well as motivating opportunity since they publish their works in a non-judgment fun environment. Moreover, blogs provide increased and more balanced students communication and they allow the shy, quieter students to have more time to consider what to write and to formulate their responses.

Third, (Kitchakarn, 2012) cited in Bloch states that using blogs for teaching writing skills is very useful because of many reasons: blogs encourage students to be more prolific writers; they make writing easier to share; they support group work, feedback, and collaboration; they provide opportunities to write outside of class, they can access or link to multimedia and related texts; and they offer students with sense of authorship.

To sum up, blog-based peer response in writing has contributions for students, they are: blogs offer students with sense of authorship, and collaborative learning; they motivate students on giving ideas and opinions; they provide a new environment; and they improve some skills; they increase students' participation, and so on. It means by using online writing, the students get many benefits for their writing, and it makes the students spend their time and energy for their writing because it is very interesting for them that make sense authorship for them.

CONCLUSION

Writing is the activity of putting something to express someone's ideas by pen onto the paper that has meaning and content, and can be understood by the other people. It is very difficult for students because of some reasons such as students need to have enough language and general intellectual skills to generate and organize ideas and put those ideas into coherent, logically ordered intelligible sentences, paragraphs, and essays. Besides, the difficulty lies on how to generate and organize ideas using an appropriate choice of vocabulary, using grammar in sentence and paragraph organization, translate these ideas into a readable text, and consume much time. To overcome the students' difficulties in writing, blog-based peer response can help them to enhance their writing. Blog is an online personal website on which an individual shares his/ her ideas, thoughts, and feelings through software that enables one easily to do it. Meanwhile, peer response in writing is the way of interaction between students to share their comments on the others' writing to help them revising and enhancing their writing. To conclude, blog-based peer response in writing is an effective tool for collaborative learning where students meet in online discussion and they can share their writing and receive comments from their peers for their writing that help students to improve their writing quality.

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