Pedagogical Strategy of Writing Paragraphs Using Edmodo to Enhance Writing Skill for EFL Students

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Abstract: In today's digital era, there are a number of social media that can be used as a tool to help writing skills for those who learn English. One of the media is "Edmodo". Edmodo is a social networking based learning platform that is intended for teachers, students and parents. In this study, the researcher integrated Process and Genre-Based Approaches with Edmodo as a teaching strategy. The participants are the students from the 2nd semester of English Language Program at Wijaya Putra University. The procedure for developing the model applied in this study consisted of: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The research found that 70% of the students support to use Edmodo in writing class while 30% of them gave a neutral opinion. Edmodo as an online media supports the effectiveness of the teaching learning process that is proved by the improvement of the students' writing skill in which their scores increase dramatically. The main barriers of the use of Edmodo is incompatibility of their smartphone applications and confusion of using the application.

Keywords: *Edmodo, Digital Writing, Daily Activities, Learning Strategy, EFL Learners.*

INTRODUCTION

The four skills necessary to master English are speaking, listening, reading and writing. Reading and listening are receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills. Among the four skills, writing is the final product of learning English. Writing is one of the compulsory subjects for students who enroll in the English

Department. The writing course has two credits for each semester and it is usually given for two semesters. One of the objectives of giving this course is that students are expected to be able to write their final assignments in English. During two semesters, lecturers train their students to practice writing based on a writing syllabus. However, two semesters of a writing class have not answered the problems, that there are still many students who find it difficult to express their thoughts in writing using English. As De Silva (2014) stated, writing skills for learners of foreign languages are a challenge because understanding and knowledge of subjects using foreign languages is a very complex process. These difficulties are caused by several factors such as vocabulary choice, sentence structure, and paragraph coherence. In line with this fact, there are some private universities allowing their students to write their final projects using *Bahasa*.

Most students consider that the writing course is a difficult and boring subjects. This is somehow difficult because all aspects of language are needed to construct a paragraph, particularly linguistic aspects. It becomes boring when teaching it with monotonous and traditional ways. For this reason, a lecturer is required to develop creative and innovative learning strategies, particularly in the field of writing to develop students' skills so that the learning process becomes more varied. The ability to express ideas in a paragraph using foreign languages will not be obtained by students in a short time. Persistent training will greatly help to develop this ability. In reality, students will write once a week based on their writing class schedule. This is one of the obstacles to boost students' writing skills. Writing skills should be easily mastered by students if they write anytime and anywhere without having to be afraid of being wrong.

However, in reality, the students are less motivated in writing because of several factors such as: lack of vocabulary, lack of knowledge about sentence, not having ideas, not having clear goals, and not having a community. These five factors are enough to produce the laziness in which ultimately inhibits them later in tasks that require writing skills such as writing an essay or even thesis writing, while in the real world when they have graduated, they are less capable of correspondence using their English. Based on

this phenomenon the writers are interested in doing research to develop students' abilities in writing skills by using Edmodo.

In today's digital era, there are a lot of social media that can be used as a tool to assist writing skills for those who learn English. One of the media is "Edmodo". Edmodo is a social networking based learning platform that is intended for teachers and students. Edmodo was first developed at the end of 2008 by Nic Borg and Jeff O 'hara and Edmodo itself is arguably an e-learning program that implements an easy, efficient and more enjoyable learning system. Edmodo is a very efficient vehicle for communication and discussion for teachers and students. With Edmodo, students can easily interact and discuss with the direct observation of the teacher. Teachers can provide teaching materials such as questions, photos, and learning videos to students easily. In addition, students can also download the teaching material.

In line with the background of the study, the formulation of the problem from this study focuses on how Edmodo can be used intensively in learning writing. In addition, this study will examine the effectiveness of Edmodo in writing class and the barriers encountered in the implementation of teaching and learning activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.   State of the Art

Edmodo is believed by some scholars to be a great digital writing platform to facilitate students' writing skill. This platform first became famous as a digital media which placed collaboration between teachers and learners in 2010. Hastomo and Pd (2016) found that there is an interaction between teaching media and students' motivation in teaching writing. According to Gay and Nurlaily (2017), the use of Edmodo is successfully facilitating students' participation in online discussions and task. Al-Naibi, Maryem, and Iman (2018) further explained students' second writing showed a statistically significant improvement and students have positive perceptions towards using Edmodo in language learning. Some scholars also integrated the use of Edmodo and genre-based writing strategy. Miftah (2018) stated that Edmodo as virtual writing community can significantly increase the students' ability in writing argumentative

essay; while Yusuf, et. al. (2018) found that there was an improvement in students' writing of narrative texts. The present research is not better or more complete than the previous ones. What make this different is the combination of Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and Process-Based Approach (PBA) which is eventually implemented on Edmodo as a media of writing.

2.   Principles in Teaching Writing Skills for EFL

Teaching writing in Indonesia is quite challenging as English is used as a foreign language. It is even more complicated due to the interference of their first language (L1). Good writing skill consists of several elements including composition, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Learners are expected to acquire all of these elements. Research conducted by Megaiab (2014) found that tenses are a completely new thing for students. They might feel frustrated when learning them because regular and irregular verb systems do not exist in *Bahasa*. To overcome the issue, teachers use some teaching approaches in order to assist their students to develop their writing skills. Knapp and Megan (2005) state that the approach used for teaching writing can be more effective if using the integrated approach; that is by focusing on genre and grammar. This approach can be applied at all levels and whatever curriculum model is used. This approach is useful in the learning and teaching process to better understand the role of language learning and especially to improve writing ability. According to Ahn (2012), there are two approaches in teaching writing skills for foreign language learners, process-based approach and genre-based. The process approach focuses on developing learners' linguistic skills through pre-writing processes such as planning, drafting, editing, and revising, while the genre-based approach is how to understand that writing has a purpose and focus on analyzing the situation based on the context. The writing is taking into account the place and time of occurrence.

METHODOLOGY

This present research was conducted at Wijaya Putra University for one semester consisting of fourteen meetings. The students who were involved in this project were those who enrolled for the second semester. The method used in this research is

descriptive qualitative. According to Cresswell (2007) qualitative research begins with assumptions, general views, the use of theoretical frameworks and uses problem formulation to solve phenomena that occur in individuals and groups. Using qualitative descriptive methods will make it easier for researchers to be more flexible in determining the instruments to collect data. The development of this English learning model uses a type of Research & Development research. It is a type of research that is widely used to solve practical problems in the world of education.

Thirteen students participated in the present study. They were assigned to post their paragraphs on Edmodo's wall based on the schedule given. The paragraphs consist of 75-250 words. To see their progress, the paragraph as a main source of data will be analyzed for the following aspects: organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanic, and content. The paragraph will be written twice a week by each student. Students will be divided into 3 groups. Each group has a schedule for writing. The topics of the paragraph describe the daily activities of students or events that students encounter.

The writing tasks were given after in-class meetings. The tasks are a progressive task so that the students start writing from a simple and short paragraph to long and more complex paragraph. The topics of paragraphs for each meeting vary. The topics were designed based on the genre–based approach. By writing these topics, students are really trained to enhance their vocabulary and sensitivity in using tenses. The students' progress is evaluated after seven meetings. The evaluation is writing a long and complex paragraph based on the theory given so that during the research, the evaluation was conducted twice. The topics for the paragraph are writing paragraph with prompts, yesterday event, future plan after graduation, a favorite place, my favorite activities on holiday, describing campus, and smoking.

The questionnaire given after the final-test was in the form of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended question is given to find out the students' opinions about using Edmodo as a social media for teaching and learning writing. The open-ended questionnaire is used to obtain better responses from the students about the positive and negative things from Edmodo. From this questionnaire, the researcher is

able to know the strengths and weaknesses of this application. Foddy (1993) asserts that open-ended questions give freedom to respondents to give their opinions; meanwhile the closed-ended questions provide fewer response options. The following questions were asked:

1. *What is your opinion about using Edmodo for Writing Class. Circle one of the following options:*

    a. Like…very much   b. Like   c. Neutral

    d. Do not Like   e. Do not like…very much.

2. *What are the strengths of using Edmodo in writing Class?*

3. *What are the barriers of using Edmodo in writing Class*

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1.   Action Research Cycle

Planning

In preparing the writing class, the researcher designed a syllabus to meet the purpose of the course. The syllabus was designed for 14 meetings. The meetings began with the theory for writing before the researcher assigned the students to write on Edmodo. The topic was focused on the process-based approach to start writing. This topic was completed in four meetings. The following topic was genre-based approach completed in four meetings as well. The rest of the meetings discussed about writing aspects and students' works.

Implementing

Prior to writing on Edmodo, the researcher introduced how to use Edmodo to the students and asked them to install the application on their cellular phone to access it easily. The syllabus was distributed to the students so that they know the purpose of the course and know what to do. The students were divided into three groups, and each group has a schedule to post on the wall. The reason for dividing the class into groups was for effectiveness, for example: If the first group posted their paragraph, the second and third group would focus on commenting on their classmates' works.

Observing

The observation was conducted during in-class and online meetings. During online meetings, the researcher observed the discussion on the Edmodo wall; and she would assist them if their discussion flattered. The discussion would continue in-class meeting to give them feedback, corrections, or suggestions.

Reflecting

In this step, the researcher analyzed the collected data. There are eight topics posted on Edmodo. The paragraphs were downloaded and analyze for the five aspects: organization, vocabulary, grammar, content, and mechanics. After analyzing the data, the paragraph will score using writing score scale ("see appendix"). The assessment result will be discussed for the next meeting in class. The purpose of this assessment is that the students will learn from their mistakes and reach for improvement in the next paragraph.

2.   Students' Writing Achievement

After analyzing the students' writing, the researcher found that the use of Edmodo as a learning media give positive effects to the five aspects of writing rubric proposed by Brown (2004). Most of them were categorized into good level. The writing process involves the tasks associated with producing written work, beginning with prewriting activities, drafting, revising, editing and eventually publishing the work. The researcher analyzed the data descriptively through the entire process. This is a qualitative study thus the data are analyzed inductively in words rather than in numbers.

The tables below show the score achieved by the students on their first and final post on Edmodo. The progress of students' writing skill increases dramatically which can be seen from the scores they achieved in the table 2 and table 3. For the first writing, the students did not brainstorm ideas and their topic sentences were not stated clearly. Consequently, their first writing's performance was poor compared to the second one. After they got information about the writing process and the genres of the paragraph, their writing are getting improved or it can be said that their paragraphs is getting well organized. The most common aspects discussed online by students are grammar and

mechanics aspects. They corrected each other and gave suggestions to their friends why they should or should not use the tenses. Since they write regularly, they learn from their mistake and they are able to correct themselves eventually before they publish their work on the wall. The aspect they discussed least is vocabulary since they do not have adequate knowledge or information regarding to this aspect. To overcome issues related to this aspect, the researcher suggested the students to consult with an online dictionary to find the meaning or synonym.

Students	Organization	Content	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanics
1	12	15	10	10	11
2	12	15	9	11	12
3	9	14	7	9	10
4	6	10	5	5	10
5	10	11	7	7	8
6	10	13	6	6	7
7	12	12	8	9	7
8	6	8	5	6	8
9	5	8	5	5	5
10	9	11	5	6	7
11	6	10	6	5	6
12	6	9	6	5	6
13	9	10	6	8	5
TOTAL	112	146	85	92	102

Table 1 Score of the 1st Post "Writing a paragraph with prompts"

Students	Organization	Content	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanics
1	18	20	18	19	19
2	19	20	18	19	19
3	15	18	17	16	17
4	13	15	17	15	18
5	18	18	16	14	16
6	18	18	15	15	18
7	20	19	20	18	19
8	12	12	15	17	16
9	12	10	15	15	15
10	13	12	16	15	15
11	13	11	16	14	14
12	13	10	16	12	14
13	14	18	17	14	15
TOTAL	198	201	216	203	215

Table 2 Score of the Final Post "Smoking"

3. Effectiveness of Edmodo in writing class

No	Opinion	Number of Students	Percentage%
1	Like…very much	6/13	46%
2	Like	3/13	23%
3	Neutral	4/13	31%
4	Do not like	-	-
5	Do not like…very much	-	-
TOTAL		13	100%

Table 3 Students' opinion of using Edmodo in Writing Class

Students had a positive response to Edmodo being used as an online tool in writing class. As we can see from the questionnaire results in Table 3,70% of the students support using Edmodo during the class. One reason stated on the questionnaire was that Edmodo provided them with a friendly and safe environment where they can interact with each other to give feedback on their paragraphs. The other reason was effectiveness. Most of the students at Wijaya Putra University are working students. Some of them often skipped the class or even coming late to class because of their working hours. In line with this reason, Edmodo gave them flexibility to access materials when they could not attend the class.

4. Barriers of Using Edmodo

Table 3 indicates that 30% of students give a neutral opinion towards the use of Edmodo. They faced challenges using Edmodo during the task, such as issues related to incompatibility of their smartphone applications. Indeed, Edmodo needs a lot of space on the smartphone and the effect was they access Edmodo slowly. The second problem is confusion in using Edmodo, for example; some of the students did not post the paragraph on the provided column but instead they posted it on comment column. According to Al-Said (2015), the findings of his study revealed that the battery does not last longer to enable students to continue using Edmodo while Byne (2015) noted that Edmodo does not provide face-to-face interaction that can allow students to express their feelings or their body language. Thus, to ensure the success of Edmodo, teachers should ensure the availability of computers, the internet or mobile phones for learning to take place.

CONCLUSION

The study investigates the effectiveness of Edmodo in writing class and the barriers encountered in the implementation of teaching and learning activities. The research found that teaching writing for EFL students could be interesting when lecturers are able to integrated teaching strategy and technology. By integrating Genre-Based Approach and Process-Based Approach and implementing them with Edmodo, the writing class students enjoyed the class which directly led to their improvement in their writing skill. Moreover Edmodo facilitated working students with effectiveness to access teaching materials from anywhere using their smartphones.

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Appendix:

The Writing Score Scale (Brown, 2004)

Aspect	Score	Performance Description
Organization	20-18 **Excellent to good**	Appropriate title, topic is stated, leads to body, transition expression used, arrangement of material show plan, supporting evidence show the generalization.
	17-15 **Good to adequate**	Adequate title, body of essay is acceptable, but some evidence may be lacking, some ideas aren't fully developed, sequence is logical but transitional expression may be absent or misused.
	14-12 **Adequate to fair**	Problems with the order of ideas in the body, generalization may not be fully supported by the evidence given, problem of organization interfere.
	11-6 **Fair to poor**	Minimally recognizable introduction, organization can barely be seen, severe problems with ordering of ideas, inadequate effort at organization.
	5-1 **Very poor**	No apparent organization of body, writer has not made any effort to organization the composition.
Content	20-18 **Excellent to good**	Essay addresses the topic, the ideas are concrete and thoroughly developed, and essay reflects thought.
	17-15 **Good to adequate**	Essay addresses the issues but misses some points, ideas could be more fully developed.
	14-12 **Adequate to fair**	Development of ideas not complete or essay is somewhat off the topic, paragraphs aren't divided exactly right.
	11-6 **Fair to poor**	Ideas incomplete, essay does not reflect carefully thinking or was hurriedly written, inadequate effort in area of content.
	5-1 **Very poor**	Ideas incomplete, essay does not reflect carefully thinking or was hurriedly written, inadequate effort in area of content.
Grammar	20-18 **Excellent to good**	Correct of preposition, modal, article, word form, and tense using, no fragment or run on sentences.
	17-15 **Good to adequate**	Some grammar problems do not influence communication and no fragments or run on sentences.
	14-12 **Adequate to fair**	Ideas are getting through to the reader, grammar problems are apparent and have negative effort on communication, run on sentences.
	11-6 **Fair to poor**	Numerous serious grammar problems interfere with communication of writer's ideas, grammar review of some areas is clearly needed, difficult to read sentences.
	5-1 **Very poor**	Severe grammar problems interfere greatly with the message, reader cannot understand what the writer was trying to say, unintelligible sentence

		structure.
Vocabulary	20-18 **Excellent to good**	Precise vocabulary usage, use of parallel structure, concise, register good.
	17-15 **Good to adequate**	Attempts variety, good vocabulary, not wordy, style fairly concise.
	14-12 **Adequate to fair**	Some vocabulary misused, lacks awareness of register, may be too wordy.
	11-6 **Fair to poor**	Poor expression of ideas, problems in vocabulary, lacks variety of structure.
	5-1 **Very poor**	Inappropriate use of vocabulary, no sentence variety.
Mechanics	20-18 **Excellent to good**	All needed capitals, paragraph intended, punctuation and spelling very neat.
	17-15 **Good to adequate**	Some problems with punctuation, occasionally spelling errors.
	14-12 **Adequate to fair**	Spelling problems distract the reader, punctuation errors interfere with ideas.
	11-6 **Fair to poor**	Part of essay not legible, errors in sentence punctuation.
	5-1 **Very poor**	Complete disregard for English writing convention, obvious capital missing, severe spelling problems.