



USING FACEBOOK TO PRACTICE WRITING SKILL: WHAT DO THE STUDENTS THINK?

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Abstract

The research aims to find out students' perceptions toward using Facebook to practice their writing skill. The sample of this study consisted of 20 participants of English major students. The main instrument used in this research was questionnaire which consisted of two sections. The first section was about the students' general performance on Facebook and its influences. The second was about the influence of Facebook on students' writing skill. The semi-structured interview was also conducted to support the validity of the data. The result shows that students think that by using Facebook, students can practice their writing by creating English caption and also writing comment on English fan page. Besides that, students can also improve their vocabulary by reading to the captions on the Facebook. Students also can have more idea to write by reading the topic discussed in this social media. It can be concluded that students give positive thought of using Facebook to practice their writing skill.

Keywords: Facebook, writing skill, media

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four language skills that should be acquired by the students. This is an activity of using language to express the ideas, feeling or desire in the written form. Writing is essential for students to develop their English because it offers benefit to the students which the students write to make their ideas clear and comprehensible (Urquhart and McIver, 2005). Writing helps students to recall information they have learnt and focus for learning, thus they can understand and memorize the lesson better and it will last longer (Urquhart and McIver, 2005). Therefore, having a good writing is crucial for students because it is not only for students' skill development, but also as communication skill which is essential in today's information society (Sari & Putri, 2019).

Although writing is important, this skill is difficult to acquire. The level of difficulty is significantly higher when a foreign language is involved. Differences in the language structures, the manner of expressing thoughts, writing styles, and other culturally varying factors greatly affect the writing of foreign language learners (Benson & Heidish in Ahmed, 2016). Moreover, in writing, the writer needs to deal with many writing components, such as grammatical structure, vocabulary, and punctuation to make a good writing (Aminatun, et al., 2018). However, students often make mistakes in composing their writing, so the idea of the text is not well delivered. The insufficient vocabulary and less writing skill to develop and organize the materials can be some factors influencing students' writing skill (Sari, 2016; Ayu & Zuraida, 2020).

To make writing activity enjoyable and comfortable, it is important for the students to know the process of writing. The process refers to the steps of constructing ideas in order. According to Soreson (2009), writing processes includes several steps, as follows: (1) Pre-writing: refers to kinds of things of the students do to get ready to write, helpful hints to suggest how to think, how to plan, and how to make choice. Pre-writing prepares the students to write freely, (2) Writing: suggestions for writing follow with details about how to use the building blocks of good writing: good sentences, good paragraphs and good multi-paragraphs papers, (3) Revising: in this stage, the students are helped with probably toughest part of writing, such as polishing the composition., improving content, improving structure, improving continuity, and improving emphasis. The goal of this phase

of the writing process is to improve the draft, (4) Proofreading: once the students have completed the revision, they need to check spelling, punctuation, grammar, mechanics, and usage.

After students knowing the steps of writing process, it is hoped that students know what to do afterwards. However, teachers are not suggested to force the students to directly implement such a complex task to practice students' writing. Step by step from the small step is advised. Nowadays, many ways, teaching method and media are applied to help teachers deliver the teaching writing well. The media or technology that can be helpful and interesting to teach are varied (Putri & Sari, 2020; Aminatun and Oktaviani, 2019a; Oktaviani and Sari, 2020; Mandasari and Wahyudin, 2021; Ambarwati and Mandasari, 2020; Mandasari, 2020; Mandasari, 2016). It can be in a form of print media (Sasalia & Sari, 2020), multimedia, web-based (Sari, 2016), application, or social media. Currently, social media is the one that is popular among experts in education as a media for teaching. According to Ahlqvist et al. (2008), social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create share, exchange and comment contents among themselves in virtual communities and networks. Social media has many positive effects such as giving the freedom to someone to write something in the internet while also allowing someone to become more updated with the news around the world or just form a companionship with their friends.

One of social media that is famous in this world is Facebook. Facebook is a global large social media that boosts more than 100 million followers, and it is one of the fastest-growing and best-known sites on Internet these days. Initiated and established by Zuckerberg in 2004, Facebook as a network first targeted high school and college students but it goes globally and actively gains its popularity of all people ages (Blattner & Fiori, 2009).. With such high numbers of followers, Facebook has currently been a leading social media. Many features such as the "like" button, comment application, and sharing button in Facebook have attracted users to create discussion and share their thoughts instantly. In line with Facebook tagline "giving people the power to share and making the world more open and connected" creates space for autonomy and engagement in exchanging ideas and knowledge due to active roles consumed by learners (Ashton & Newman, 2006). In Facebook, users can have their own group interests, share and exchange messages between them via the available applications easily (Kwong, 2007).

Seeing the interactive feature of Facebook, it is believed that it can provide students great opportunities to practice their writing. In other words, students post their written pieces, receive comments, write and post their own comments, and reply to other Facebook group members. Therefore, this interactive communication enables students to actively engage in the writing process and improve their writing skills (Ayu, 2020). It shows that learning process becomes easier as we connect to the use of technology; that is by using social media platform as Facebook (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2019). Also, the computer-based grammar checkers and spelling checkers that students use from time to time while interacting on Facebook groups, are considered to be powerful ways of providing immediate feedback on their written output. Further, the use of Facebook is deemed to have a positive impact on boosting student motivation and attitude (Kabilan, Ahmed, & Abidin, 2010). Moreover, a previous study conducted by Wahyudin (2018) found that Facebook can also be utilized as an instructional media and also help students improve their writing ability as well as critical thinking.

Students in this era mostly have social media like Facebook to communicate with their friends to get information or learn English. Besides that student tend to use social media in daily activities and learning activities. This phenomenon attracts the researchers to explore the use of Facebook as a media for practicing writing skill in order to enhance students' writing skill. The researchers also want find out the students' responses and experiences towards it. However, the writing steps implemented in the process of writing using Facebook is not in a formal writing style. In this research, the students practice their writing from the small step, which is by writing an English caption from their own thinking or idea on their Facebook. As Ayu & Zuraida (2020) stated that for EFL students, the more they think, the more they are unsure to write. That is why a small step like writing English caption can be a casual and calm star for students to write without having to burden them. This way is believed as a positive habit in writing before moving to an advanced step in a level of long paragraphs or text.

METHOD

The type of research was qualitative research. The population of this study was English major students at Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia Bandar Lampung, in which 20 students became the sample of the research. The main research instrument in this study was questionnaire. According to Ary et al. (2010), questionnaire is an instrument in which respondents provide written responses to questions or mark items that indicate their responses. In this research, the researchers used questionnaire to collect the data, because by using questionnaire, the answer will be well organized. Besides that, an interview was also implemented to make sure the validity of the data taken from the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used in this survey consisted of two sections. Section A is about taking information of the students' language usage, namely their activities on Facebook, and whether Facebook can improve their writing skills. Section B comprised items eliciting information on the influence of Facebook to improve their writing ability. This questionnaire used a 5 point Likert-type scale, in which responses ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. While the interview was using semi-structured interview which the interviewer did not strictly follow a formalized list of questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented in two sections. The first one presents the students' general performance on Facebook and its general influence to students' writing. The second section answers the question whether or not using Facebook can improve students' English skill and their writing skill.

Table 1. Students' general performance on Facebook and its influences

Question	Yes	No
Do you have a Facebook account?	20	-
Do you often open Facebook account?	13	7
Do you consider yourself as an active Facebook user?	9	11
Do you often follow an account that often post quotations or captions in English?	9	11
Have you ever quoted an English caption to practice your writing?	16	4
Do you often re-write English caption in your book?	7	13
Do you think that the use of Facebook influence your writing skill?	13	7
Do you think that the use of a Facebook can increase your writing skill?	13	7
Do you intentionally read English caption or English fans page in Facebook to increase your vocabulary?	15	5
Do you think that reading a caption in Facebook can increase your vocabulary than you read it in dictionary?	15	5

From the data above, we can see that all of the participant have a Facebook account, it shows that Facebook is definitely a global and popular social media for almost students around the world. More than a half of the sample still often opens their Facebook account although only 9 out of 20 who are still being an active user. There are 9 students who follow accounts which post the caption in English. They believe this is one of their efforts to improve their English skill. Most of students admit that they have ever quoted an English caption and around 7 of them re-write the captions in their book. By doing this, they can train their English writing and spelling and can also get new vocabulary. For English students, vocabulary is really important because it goes hand in hand with all English skills and by increasing vocabulary, those English skills will also increase (Simamora & Oktaviani, 2020).

According to the data, around 13 students believe that using Facebook can influence and increase their writing skill. Seeing the pattern of someone's sentence posted on English fans page will stimulate the students to learn the sentence formula that is really important for students' sentence building in their writing. Seeing an English caption on Facebook can also motivate the student to also write English caption by delivering what they think about something. It is also shown that there are 15 students out of 20 students who are intentionally join English fans page on Facebook and read the English caption to increase their vocabulary. Having good vocabulary will lead to good English skill, including writing. As stated by Aminatun & Oktaviani (2019b) that vocabulary is one of the important factors in learning language. Below are some of students' thought related to the use of Facebook for their English skill, especially writing.

S1: I have Facebook and I usually use it to learn English because there many Facebook groups which discuss about English materials.

S2: I usually write what I got from Facebook in my book, so I can learn it anytime when I need it. By writing it in my book, indirectly I also practice my writing.

S3: Sometimes I write captions on my Facebook in English and ask my friends to check it. If there's error or mistakes, they will give comment and I will learn from it. It is very useful.

(Note: S = student)

The feature on Facebook enables the students to share their thought by writing the caption on students' status. Besides, the comment section can also be a place for students' friends on Facebook to have a discussion towards what is written by the students. The discussion can focus on many things, such as the topic, the

grammatical structure, the writing component, punctuation, and many more. If there are some mistakes, students can learn from each other and it will improve their writing in the future. Writing correction will help students to find out their mistakes and make students realize it, then learn from it (Muliyah et al., 2020).

Table 2. The influence of Facebook on students' writing

	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Facebook influences students' writing skill.	1	-	5	11	2
By creating English caption on Facebook, students can increase their writing skill.	2	-	3	10	5
By reading a caption on Facebook students can increase their vocabulary.	1	-	4	11	4

The table demonstrated that, based on three questionnaires, students' perceptions about using facebook to improve students writing skill are similar, with conclusions agreeing. This data shows that 11 participants strongly agree and 2 participants agree that Facebook influence students' writing skill. The second and third perceptions, that by creating English caption on Facebook, students can increase their writing skill. Then, by reading a caption on Facebook, students can increase their vocabulary. This perceptions obtained a result of 15 students agree that increasing vocabulary and writing skills is not only by creating caption but also through reading a caption.

S4: I can get new vocabulary by reading someone's status on Facebook and sometimes I can also get inspiration or idea to write by reading status on Facebook.

S5: I still use Facebook because I can get a lot of information from Facebook. I join several English clubs on Facebook and sometimes I also join the discussion by giving comment. It is my way to practice my English skill, especially writing skill, and also my grammar and vocabulary.

Seeing the result, it can be inferred that Facebook, as a mean for language learning, might influence the students' writing skills. The students agree that Facebook can influence as well as increase their writing skill. Since writing also need vocabulary, it is also beneficial for students to learn by reading the various captions on Facebook to improve their vocabulary. As students' vocabulary increases, their writing will also get much better and there is less confusion in coveying the idea. The results of the study above are in line with Kabilan et al. (2010) and Shih (2011) that students learned new sentences or new writing structures when they saw friends share feelings and ideas, and they commented on each other's comments. Moreover, it also confirms that the use of technology give advantageous impacts for teaching and learning process (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020; Muliyah et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Writing skill should be mastered by the EFL students. Writing is an activity of using language to express the students' ideas, feeling or desire in the written form. The interactive feature of Facebook is believed to provide students great opportunities to practice their writing. In other words, students post their written pieces, receive comments, write and post their own comments, and reply to other Facebook group members. Therefore, this interactive communication enables students to actively engage in the writing process and improve their writing skill. Based on the result, the students' perceptions on the use of Facebook can improve their writing skill. Not only writing skill, Facebook can also elevate students' English skills. More than that, students' grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary can also increase since Facebook enable the users to join the community or fan page according to their interest, such as English fan page. This feature allows the students to learn many things in order to develop and upgrade their English skills. Overall, it can be said that students' writing performance is improved with the use of Facebook. By reading and writing English captions on students' Facebook status, students can practice and train their writing and get correction or comments from the readers to be a feedback for a better writing in the future. With Facebook, more meaningful learning environment can be created and comment feature makes the learning process easier and fun. It is hoped that teachers can also utilize Facebook as one of the media to teach English in creative way, especially to teach writing.

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