

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this introductory section, the background underpinning the study is presented along with the overview of the theory. Then, this section outlines the purposes of the study derived from the formulation of the research questions. The scope of the study is also discussed in this section in order to narrow the focus of the study. Lastly, the significance of the study is elaborated in the rest of this section.

1.1 Background

English has long been acknowledged as the medium of communication among international communities of business, science, culture and intellectual life (McKay, 2004: 3). More than 75 countries use English as their official language; first or second language. Approximately 80 percent of the information stored in computer is written in English (Voghan, 2011: 21). Walker (2009) in TED conference states that not only American, British, Australian or other English countries which force the world to recognize English as the world language, but also the world itself pulls English as the international language. Due to its important status, English is essentially needed to be mastered by everyone.

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia. Teaching English in Indonesia has many challenges because it is not commonly used in our daily life. Furthermore, English is rather difficult because we do not recognize it since we were born. It is commonly taught firstly at school, which is in junior high school. In this case, we rely on the role of teacher in teaching the language to children.

Basically, one of the targets of teaching and learning English at school is to make students be able to communicate in English both in spoken and in written language. To achieve this, there are four language skills that have to be taught; they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are passive or receptive skills, while speaking and writing are active or productive skills (Harmer, 2001: 199, 246). All of the skills are important. However, one of language skills that encourages students to be more productive and creative is writing skill.

Writing is not merely about putting words on a piece of paper, but it is more

complex than that. Writing is a combination of process and product. We need a quite long process starting from planning, drafting, editing, and final drafting to produce a piece of writing (Harmer, 2004: 4). Moreover, in writing, a writer may need to express his/her ideas, experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Therefore, to accomplish his/her goal, the writer has to master sufficient language components such as grammar, vocabulary, and spelling (Harmer, 2001: 255).

Teaching writing at senior high school level in Indonesia has been confronted by a number of problems such as poor writing abilities of most students, and teachers' negative attitude toward teaching writing (Alwasilah, 1997). Some researchers suggest that the problems found in learning to write in English as a subject at school have something to do with the limited time allocated for teaching English, lack opportunity to actually practice English in the classroom, less authentic materials and lack opportunity to socialize English outside the classroom (Darjowijoyo, 2000; Musthafa, 2001; Nur, 2004). Moreover, the pre-survey conducted to several students from a senior high school in Subang showed that there are two problems which make students feel reluctant to write. First, the students are bored and uninterested in the use of conventional media in the learning process. Second, their writing seldom gets feedback from their teachers. Besides those two problems, the problems also arise from the teacher's part. The teachers often complain about the limited time and the big size of the class. Moreover, the teachers also mentioned that writing skill is seldom taught because it is not tested on the national exam. This shows that writing has not received a maximum portion in learning activity at this school.

In relation to those problems, teachers need to find out techniques or means that can be used to increase students' motivation in learning writing. The teachers also need to find out media which have flexibility in time and place as well as the ones that can be used to give feedback to the students effectively.

As we know, today's students cannot be separated from technology. Most of the time, they always get the influence of technology and have difficulty in comprehending the world without it (Black in Buskist & Benassi, 2012: 163). They are always connected and like to access information anytime and anywhere from their personal devices. Therefore, it may be a good idea to incorporate the

technology into teaching and learning process.

The use of technology can improve the professionalism of the teachers. It is because in the era in which technology application and usage have exploded, technological knowledge is a part of the teacher's competences. The new framework in education proposed by Koehler and Mishra called as technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) requires teacher to have three kinds of knowledge, namely content, pedagogy and technology for the successful teaching and learning process (Koehler and Mishra in Angeli & Valanides, 2015: 5).

The use of technology, like the internet-based media, can be used to empower students, increase creativity, foster independence, enable students to reach number of available resources for learning and help to develop their skill in writing. Moreover, it also has several benefits including flexibility in time and place. Therefore, students can access it anytime and anyplace.

One of the internet-based media that focuses on education is learning management system (LMS). The three well-known LMS that can be used for educational purposes among others are Moodle, Edmodo, and Schoology. Those three Learning Management Systems have been compared by the writer at the preliminary research which involved the features of the LMS and its technicality. Driven by the result of the preliminary study, this study chooses Schoology as the blended learning platform. This application is chosen for several reasons. First, in terms of its features, Schoology is almost similar with Moodle. Yet, it is easier to be operated than Moodle. Second, Schoology has sophisticated features that are not available on Edmodo such as giving direct message, analytic tools for checking students' attendance, uploading files which can be seen directly on the app, sharing links, connecting with social media, and badges as award for students. Schoology also has several other features that are similar to what Edmodo has, such as taking a poll, a quiz or even submitting or doing assessment. Third, Schoology provides free and secure learning space for teachers and students to collaborate through the internet. Therefore, students and teachers can access the facilities without worrying about the payment and distraction from others since no one can join to the class in that media without the permission or code from the teacher. Fourth, Schoology can also be installed in android based mobile phone,

tablet, and note which would make the application become accessible to the students and teachers. Last but not least, Schoology has similar form with Facebook. This similarity would allow the users of the media to easily operate its features and get less technical problems.

Despite the beneficial features, using Schoology in a classroom is still a new phenomenon for Indonesian teachers. According to the 2009 survey conducted by the Esfindo team, the use of ICT in Indonesia is still very low compared to the number of schools, even in the capital city. Indonesian teachers are not too familiar with the use of technology such as learning management system in English classroom. Moreover, the empirical report on how Schoology is applied is hardly found.

Accordingly, it is considered crucial to introduce Schoology as blended learning platform in teaching writing in order to enable teachers to provide an alternative medium that can motivate the students to write. Moreover, it is also believed that showing the effect of using Schoology in teaching writing is significant as the result of it will convince the teachers to use Schoology or not in their teaching activity and showing how the process of writing activity is applied by using Schoology is important as well.

1.2 Research questions

In accordance with the background of the study stated in the previous section, the present study tries to figure out the following research questions:

1. Does Schoology as blended learning platform affect the students' ability in writing?
2. How is Schoology used as blended learning platform in teaching writing at senior high school?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Relevant with the research questions, the study intends to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To investigate whether Schoology as blended learning platform affects the

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students' writing ability.

2) To portray how Schoology is used in teaching writing at senior high schools.

1.4 Limitation of the study

This study focuses on two matters. First, it concerns with the effect of Schoology as blended learning platform on the students' writing ability. Second, it portrays how the Schoology is implemented in teaching writing at a senior high school in Subang.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to contribute to the EFL teaching learning activity by enriching blended learning implementation in Indonesia context. Moreover, the study is expected to help English teachers, particularly at senior high schools, to create and provide a new dynamic learning environment by the assistance of Schoology as blended learning platform. Schoology is not only provided students with offline classes but also online classes. Finally, it is expected that the use of Schoology can help students in writing and it may shift students' habit in using social media to a meaningful activity.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

1. Blended learning in the study is defined as the combination between face-to-face learning and online learning (Bonk & Graham, 2005)
2. Schoology is a kind of learning management system. The interface is similar to facebook. (Schoology, 2017)

1.7 Organization of the Study

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction part which covers the background, the research questions, the research purposes, the limitation of the study, the significance of the research, the organization of the research and concluding remark. Chapter two elaborates the theoretical frameworks of this study which include the theory of blended Learning, writing, and learning management system (Schoology). Chapter three outlines the research

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methodology consisting of the research site, research design, research methods, instruments, data collection, and analysis. Chapter four highlights the discussion of the research. The last chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations. The research is then completed by bibliography and appendices.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

The chapter has highlighted the introduction of the present research. The introduction itself comprises background, research questions, purposes of the research, limitation of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and the organization of the study. The following chapter discusses the theoretical framework.

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