

**AN ANALYSIS ON A STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE IN USING BLOG AS LEARNIG  
TOOL FOR WRITING ACTIVITY**

**A RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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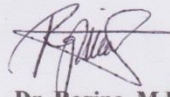
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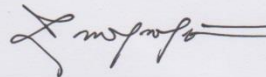
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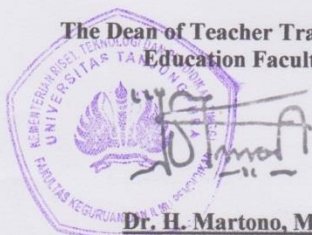
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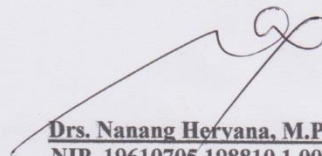
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# AN ANALYSIS ON A STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE OF USING BLOG AS LEARNING TOOL FOR WRITING ACTIVITY

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## *Abstract*

*This research concentrates on specific relevant questions, those are how blog helps as learning tool for writing activity and the difficulties of using blog as learning tool for writing activity. Based on the research problem, the design of this research is case study. The subject of this research is one student (Miss X) who has some criteria of having the experiences in using blog, being at least a second semester student(if the student does not have any experience about blog), and having their own blog. The data were collected through interview and observation. From the findings, the researcher finds out that blog helped Miss X learning tool for writing activity by providing a journal or as a media for writing, providing motivational feedback and creating critical thinking environment. The research findings also show that there are some difficulties which faced by Miss X including some difficulties in managing time, lack of Writing skill, programming skill, Multimedia devices, readers and low internet connection.*

***Key Words: Analysis, Student's Experience, Using Blog as Learning Tool, Writing Activity.***

Today, we all live in the age of digital technology. Many aspects of the way we live have been changed by information and communication technology (ICT). Anderson (2010, p. 20) claims that any child born since the beginning of this century is growing up in a digital world. Rozgiene, Medvedeva, & Straková (2008, p. 8) point out that ICT has been used in language learning for several decades now. Therefore, English Education Study Program of Teacher Training and Education Faculty Tanjungpura University provides a subject that is related to ICT, that is Teaching Learning with ICT.

This subject helps students to use ICT for their learning and teaching. One of the ICT medias that the students use is blog. According to Mercer (2006, p. 14) a blog, or weblog, is almost like a journal, maintained by one person only. In the case of the demo site, there will be a bunch of blog writers who post to the site regularly in order to keep the general public informed about their movements and developments in their specific areas of focus. According to Genulius ( 2010, pp. 12, 63) blog has many features that make students be interested in using it especially for

writing. In language learning, blogging has been experimentally used as a tool to develop writing. Experience of writing on blogs may provide opportunities to help students to improve their knowledge in writing. The cycle of blogging activities such as making blog posts, viewing other bloggers' posts, commenting, and reflecting on them are beneficial in polishing the writing skills. Blog is a good tool but not all of students are interested in it.

The researcher did a little observation and asked some students who already passed the ICT subject. Most of the students were only interested in using blog only in this subject. In fact, after this subject is over, the students stopped using their blog.

From the information that the researcher gained, most of them are lazy to use their blog. It was really complicated to use it even though it had so many benefits. But, there is still someone who is still using this blog. She had been using blog even before she met this subject and is still using as learning tool for writing activity.

Miss X has been using blog since 2013. Miss X has so many experiences in using

blog. She how to use blog as learning tool for writing activity knows and the difficulties of using blog. From Miss X's experiences, the researcher decided to make her as subject for this research.

The use of blog as learning tool for writing activity and related topics have been rather neglected in research. Akhid Lutfian (2011) did a research about improving students' writing skill through English web blog among the tenth graders of SMAN 7 Purworejo. The results of this study showed that the use of the web blog was effective as learning tool. Blog improve students' writing skills based on the qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The learning process became more interesting and the students enjoyed the writing process. The students' problems in writing could be reduced by using web blog in the teaching-learning process and applying writing stages through web blog.

This previous research has a similarity and some differences with this research. The similarity is discussed about the use of blog as the tool for learning. There are some differences compared to this research, the first is the type of research. In the previous research, the researcher used an action research while the researcher used a case study. The quantity of the research subject was also different. In the previous research, the researcher used 32 students, but the researcher used one subject with specific criteria. The focus of research was also different even though the researcher discussed about the use of blog in improving writing. The researcher focused on the Miss X's experience in using blog as learning tool for writing activity while in the previous research the researcher focused on the process improving the writing skill by using blog.

Another research had been done by Sidek and Yunus (2011) with a title students' experiences on using blog as learning journals. The findings showed that students enjoyed the use of computer tools in their lesson and most of them expressed their wish to see blogging being used more widely. The findings also revealed the students recommendations to improve the use of blog

as learning journal based on their own experiences. In essence, this paper was designed to explore the potential of blogs to support reflection and communication in realistic circumstances, and to explore the strength and weaknesses of current practice in order to build more effective practice in the future.

This research has so many similarities especially in the purpose to know about the students' experiences to use blog as learning tool, but there are some differences. Those are from the students quantity and the researcher from previous research only used the blog as journal. The researcher used the same method of research.

These previous researches are guides to help the researcher in making the research. That is why based on the previous researches and information given; the researcher's research title is an analysis on a Student's experience of using blog as learning tool for writing activity. In this research, the researcher discusses about Miss X's experiences in using blog and hopes that in the end this research can help motivate other students to use blog after Teaching and Learning with ICT subject is over.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research presented here was using a "case study" which was described by Yin (2003, p. 15) was like other research strategies, a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures. Case study was chosen as a framework for the study because its research goals, instruments, and data collection or analysis process were in line with the research questions that were investigated. In a case study, a single unit was taken and investigated in detail and in relation to the research questions asked. In addition, "case study allowed the scholar to take a holistic approach to studying a phenomenon in its natural setting" (Willis, 2008, p. 212). The research questions of the study required the researcher to investigate a particular instructional tool (Blogs) in a specific skills course (Writing) in one institution (UNTAN). Thus, there was a

match between the phenomenon at hand and the research framework case study provided. Case study also required a detailed description of the case subjected to the study; therefore, the rest of the chapter provides a thorough presentation of the context, participants, and data collection or analysis processes.

This research was an analysis on a students' experience in using blog as learning tool for writing activity. Therefore, the researcher only took one student. The participants were determined by using purposive sampling. In selecting the participants of this research, the researcher applied several criteria. Therefore, the requirements below were the criteria that were used to select the student who was the participant of this research project. (1) student has experiences in using blog for writing, (2) the student, who does not have experience in using blog, must be at least a 2<sup>nd</sup> semester student who is in Teaching and Learning with ICT class, (3) the student must have their own blog.

From the criteria above, the researcher had found one student by asking his friends and the lecturer who was teaching this subject. Coincidentally, she was a 2<sup>nd</sup> semester student. She also had experiences in using blog because she had written in her personal blog since 2014. The participant was referred as Miss X.

In order to conduct this research, the researcher did the preparation of the research (1) Asked the information about the student that had fulfilled the criteria, (2) Constructed the instrument for collecting data (interview). Then conducting the case study by observing the blog and doing interview. After that, analyse the data and developed conclusions and constructed the research report.

In this research the data and information were collected from a student's experiences in using blog as learning tool for writing activity. The experience data was collected through observation and interview questions. The researcher did some screenshots on Miss X's blog and semi-structure interview to Miss X.

Techniques that used is observation and interview. Observation is a systematic method

of data collection that relies on a researcher's ability to gather data through his or her senses (O' Leary, 2004, p. 170). Observation was conducted to see the content in Miss X's blog. It was done to provide the proof of Miss X's experiences in using blog. Moreover, for collecting the data, the researcher did some screenshots to support the statements in the interview. The other technique of collecting data used in this research was interview. Interview could be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. The form of interview in this research was semi-structured interview. O' Leary (2004, p. 164) stated that these interviews were neither fully fixed nor fully free and were perhaps best seen as flexible. Interviewers generally started with some defined questioning plan, but pursued a more conversational style of interview that might see questions answered in an order more natural to the flow of conversation. In this case, the researcher provided the interview guide questions, but the questions could be added depending on the interviewees' answers. So that, it did not only focus on the interview guide questions.

The questions covered such aspects as how are Miss X experiences in using blog, how blog may help as learning tool for writing activity and the difficulties of using blog as learning tool for writing activity. Finally, for collecting the data, the researcher recorded the conversations and transcribed them.

For this research project, the researcher used observation and interview as the techniques of collecting data. For the observation, the researcher used some screenshots to support the statements in the interview. Not all of the posts were screenshots, but only the necessary screenshots. For the interview, the researcher used semi-structured interview guides and voice recorder for conducting it. After all the interview data was collected, the researcher transcribed the data. Therefore, there are three instruments of collecting data used in this research as screenshots, semi-structured interview guides and voice recorder.

In order to analyse the interview data, there are three phases according to model of

Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 10-11) those are data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction was defined as the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up transcription. After data collection proceeded, the next was data reduction (summarising the data, coding, determining the theme and pattern of the data and discarding unnecessary data). In this case, the researcher reduced, summarised and coded the students' answer to interview questions about her experience in using blog as learning tool for writing activity.

Displaying the data means to present the data. So that it was easier to understand what was happening and to plan the next step based on the understanding. In qualitative research, the data could be present in the forms of narrative explanation, charts, diagrams, graphics, network, etc. (Punch, 2009).

The third phase of analysing qualitative data according to Miles and Huberman (1994) was conclusion drawing and verification. It meant drawing meaning from displayed data or explained the meaning of the data.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Findings**

The data about Miss X's experiences is obtained from observation and interview. Miss X was chosen as subject in this research because she fulfilled the criteria given by the researcher. A little observation was conducted to see Miss X's blog contents. From the observation, the researcher found that not all of the posts were in English. She started writing at her blog in 2014. She wrote it in Indonesian language and started writing in English in 2017. In 2015, she did not write anything in her blog.

The interview was also conducted to get data about Miss X's experiences in using blog. It was done at BCLC UNTAN for about

7 minutes. The complete interview data can be seen in Appendix 1. In the interview, Miss X talked about her experiences in using blog as a learning tool for writing activity. She started writing since she was in junior high school and she was still a beginner at that time until her second semester in university, so she has written the blog for 5 years.

She was not an active blogger because she rarely wrote in blog until she became a senior high school student because of some circumstances. One of the circumstances was that she did not have media, such as laptop or computer. She needed to borrow a laptop or computer to write in a blog. The internet connection was also her difficulty at that time. As a junior high school student, she could not freely access the internet and at that time the use of internet cost so much money, it was hardly affordable for a junior high school student. Senior high school was the moment where she started to write in blog actively because she already had a laptop and internet connection.

From Miss X's experiences, something drove her to write in a blog. The benefits and the beautiful appearance of blog drove and motivated her to write in blog. The beautiful appearance of blog was one of factors that made blog more interesting than other learning tools. She thought the better appearance in a blog made her motivated to write in it.

Blog has helped Miss X as learning tool for writing activity. As stated in her interview, blog has so many benefits. Blog has helped Miss X by providing media for writing, providing motivational feedback and creating critical thinking environment.

Blog has been used as media for writing by so many people for writing activity. Miss X writes any topics so she can practice her writing and hope her writing be beneficial for her readers. Blog was very useful for her too because if she wanted to start writing, she would see the previous post and saw the mistake so she would not make the same mistake in her new post. The mistake she referred was misspelling and grammatical error

Feedback from readers can give the writer improvement in her writing and even motivate her to write more and better. Miss X got feedback from some of her readers, but not all of the posts got a feedback. The readers who gave feedbacks were about five people. From that point, she concluded that the commented posts were the best or the good one. The Comments given by people were about topic that Miss X should write, correction about mistakes in her writing and some supports for her to write more. These comments made Miss X motivated and kept on writing until now.

To make a good writing, a writer needed to think of what topic to write, the diction and even an analyses of other people's writing as our references; blog can be as learning tool for that. Miss X thought that while writing in a blog, the process of writing in blog has made her thinking critically. The process of choosing a topic and words for her blog was the process that made her think critically. Critical thinking did not only come from the process of writing, but also from analysing the other people's works. In order to put an interesting post, she needed to take people's interesting idea and remake it. To analyse people's works, critical thinking was needed.

Miss X has 5-year experience in writing in a blog and still doing it until now. Therefore, some difficulties in using blog as learning tool for writing activity have occurred in its process such as the difficulties in managing time, lack of grammar ability, the difficulties in designing blog, lack of multimedia devices, lack of readers and low internet connection.

The difficulties in managing time to do something sometimes happen to the student who is still learning. That problem also came to Miss X who use blog as learning tool for writing activity. She did not post on her blog every day. Sometimes, she posted 2 at the same day. She did not finish her writing on the previous day. There were some factors that made her so hard to manage her time such as her full activities as a student like doing

homeworks, being active in an organisation and having a part-time job. These activities took so much of her time and stamina. So, the time for her to write in blog was being used to rest and she also did not write effectively because she would not finish her writing due the limited time.

Blog can be a fun writing tool if it is supported with a good writing skill. Miss X has written in blog for five years and she still has difficulties in her writing. She needed to practice more and if she wanted to be a good writer, 5 years was not enough especially in improving her grammar ability. In order to check her grammar she needed an expert like a lecturer to correct it, because the grammar checker in Microsoft Word was still wrong sometimes. She also did not know if there were some mistakes in her grammar until someone told her that she had wrong grammar in her writing. Until now, when she wrote in her blog, she still made grammar mistakes and sometimes, she also did not know where her grammar mistakes were even though she knew she made mistakes.

Appearance in a blog is one of the points that makes a blog attractive and makes everyone want to write in it. Miss X thought that her programming skill is still lacking, that is why her blog appearance was not attractive enough and she has difficulty in making it better.

In order to support a blog to be learning tool for writing, a good device that can support the features in blog is needed. Miss X has difficulty with her multimedia devices. She did not have proper multimedia devices. She stated that a good blogger needed good devices in order to make cool content in a good quality. There were some problems from Miss X's multimedia devices such as her computer was so slow, some features could not be supported because her computer was an old product and sometimes, her computer needed to restart because it was not responding.

Readers are very important for someone who writes in a blog. Blog can be an effective learning tool for writing, if there is a reader who reacts to our writing. Miss X has

difficulties in getting feedback from readers. Many of her blog's readers did not give any comments after they read the post in the blog. she could assume two things, the first was the readers were an apathetic. They did not care about the blog and left after reading it. The second was her blog was not popular. People did not know about her blog site and the existence of her blog

To use blog as learning tool for writing, internet connection is needed. Most of people have difficulty in their internet connection especially Miss X. Some internet connections at her place were very slow and could not connect properly. The other factors, the internet providers were very expensive and she needed to save money in order to afford it.

## **Discussion**

Overall, from the finding above, we can confirm that Miss X has some difficulties in using blog to improve her writing skill but behind that, blog has helped her as learning tool for writing activity. Despite there are so many difficulties in using blog, blog really helps her as learning tool for writing activity, that fact is in line with the previous research that is done by Sidek and Yunus (2011) with a title Students' Experiences on Using Blog as Learning Journals. From the previous research, the students who use blog as journal give a positive impression about it.

Using blog as journal really helps improve writing because the journal will be the writers training ground to practice writing. It is also easy for the writers to see their previous or past blog and learn from the mistakes, so the writers will be able to produce writing with a good grammar or vocabulary. This fact is also supported by Akhid Lutfian (2011) in his research, the students' problems in writing can be reduced by using web blog in the teaching-learning process and by applying writing stages through the web blog. Feedback from the readers is also one of the parts in blog that can improve writing. In Sidek and Yunus' research (2011), their students want more feedback from the reader and instructor, because the feedback will improve and help

them more in their own learning. Miss X also gets a little feedback from her reader, but that feedback brings a positive effect like motivation for her to write more. Feedback from readers can also improve the writer's ability in writing. Readers can correct the wrong grammar or misspelling and put it on a comment box. Positive feedback can encourage the writer to write better and more so the readers can enjoy the blog.

Nadzrah (2009) also stated that using blog as one of the writing activities was found encouraging and further enhancing learners writing and critical thinking skill. Miss X found that blog really helped her think critically. Critical thinking can improve the quality of writing. In choosing a topic for writing, the writers need to think critically because they choose the topic that is suitable to their readers to enjoy. Not only that, the diction should be considered in writing. We need to think carefully what is the best word to put in our post, because a good word choice will make the readers feel enjoyable to read and critical thinking is needed to make that happens. You also need to think critically to analyse other people's work, take the interesting part and remake it in order to make your post better. Writing in blog really creates an environment for the writers to think critically which can make the quality of writing better and can improve the writing skill.

Blogs really help as learning tool for writing activity. But the difficulties of using blog as learning tool for writing activity cannot be avoided. There are some difficulties that are faced by Miss X such difficulty in managing time, lack of writing skill, lack of multimedia devices, lack of programming skill, lack of readers and low internet connection. These difficulties are divided into two groups; Internal and external difficulties.

In internal factor there are Miss X's time management, writing skill and programming skill. As Miss X told from her interview, time management is one of her difficulties. Time management is categorised as internal factor because time is managed by the writer itself. The writer is the one who chooses the time



when they want to write and post in blog. The difficulty in Miss X's time management is that there are too many activities that make her tired so she cannot write. She cannot manage her time management so well. Therefore, the best possible solution from Miss X time management's difficulty is that she should reduce some of her activities. Even if she does not want to reduce her activities, she should make a new schedule for her to write without disturbing the other activities. So there is time for her to write in blog around 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Lack of writing skill is also categorised as the internal difficulty. Her problem is that the ability in understanding the grammar is still not good, that is why it is categorised in the internal group. As she stated in the interview, sometimes she does not even know there is a mistake in her writing, her knowledge about writing is not enough. In order to help Miss X difficulty in writing, possible solutions are given to her. Miss X should read more books about grammar ability or if she does not have any books about grammar, she can write on a draft and consult her writing with an expert like the lecturer at her university before posting it on her blog.

Lack of programming skill is categorised as the internal factor too. The factor that makes Miss X has difficulty in designing blog is that she lacks of programming skill. Similar to the writing technique, her ability to understand programs in the blog is not good enough. That is why it is categorised in internal factor. Miss X states that she lacks programming ability that is why she thinks her blog design is not good. To make a good blog design, she needs to improve her programming ability but it is hard for her. She needs to find resources about programming but it is very difficult for her. That is why the possible solution for Miss X is to go to the other faculty. The other faculty such as engineering faculty that has the major related to IT. People at that faculty can help Miss X in designing her blog or teach her about programming so she can design her blog by herself.

On the other hand, in the external factor there are lack of multimedia devices, lack of readers and low internet connection. Multimedia devices are an external difficulty because it comes from outside, not from the writer herself. In her statement, she states that she has a problem with her computer, the computer is so slow and sometimes it is not responding. These difficulties come from the computer itself so the best solutions for this difficulty are, Miss X should change her media to the latest one or she could go to cyber café. Cyber café is a place where you can use their computer to access your blog. The other solution is to uninstall the program you do not need, it will make your computer work faster.

Readers are also external difficulty because feedback is given by the reader who reads the blog, not from the writer of the blog. Miss X states that she rarely gets a comment or feedback from her reader. From that point, she assumes that her blog is not popular or readers are apathetic. There are some possible solution for these difficulties is, Miss X needs to promote her blog site to other people. Miss X can use another social media to promote her blog or promote it through her friends. For the people who are apathetic, Miss X can give them some presents for the best comment or their comments will be used as a subject or topic for the next post.

Low Internet connection is the common difficulty in using blog and it is an external difficulty that is faced not only by blog users but all of internet users. From the previous research by Sidek and Yunus (2011), internet connection is also their difficulty and internet connection difficulty should be considered. Miss X stated that the internet provider that she is using is slow and sometimes it is not working. Some of the internet providers are expensive and some areas are not covered with the internet connection. Therefore, the best possible solution for this difficulty is, search for other internet providers that are not really expensive but it works well. It does not need to be the best, but it should work properly. The other solution just go to the internet cafe, some cafes provide fast internet

connection. Furthermore, she can possibly ask the government to make the internet connection by making petition.

In conclusion, the previous research on using blogs in EFL studies and this research have shown many similar results. The previous study and some theories have proven that blog helps improve writing such as blog provides media for writing, provides motivational feedback and creates critical thinking environment. In using blog there are some difficulties that are faced such as difficulties in managing time, lack writing skill, lack of programming skill, lack of multimedia devices, lack of readers and low internet connection.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussions presented in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that blog helped Miss X in some ways such as blog provides media for writing, provides motivational feedback and creates critical thinking environment. Some difficulties that are faced by Miss X include time management, lack of writing skill, lack of programming skill blog, lack of multimedia devices, lack of readers and low internet connection.

### Suggestion

Based on the conclusion that has been explained before, some suggestions will be directed toward the lecturer, the other researchers and faculty.

The researcher expects the other researcher who will conduct a similar research to have better preparation before conducting the research. The other researchers should make sure that the participant has the right criteria for the research. In addition, other researchers must have sufficient knowledge related to their research study.

To faculty, the faculty needs to provide students with the best media because the students deserve to get it. The faculty should provide stable internet so students can access it easily. The faculty also need to make

computer room so the students can study by using it if there is a subject that requires computer or laptop, so students can work on the campus.

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