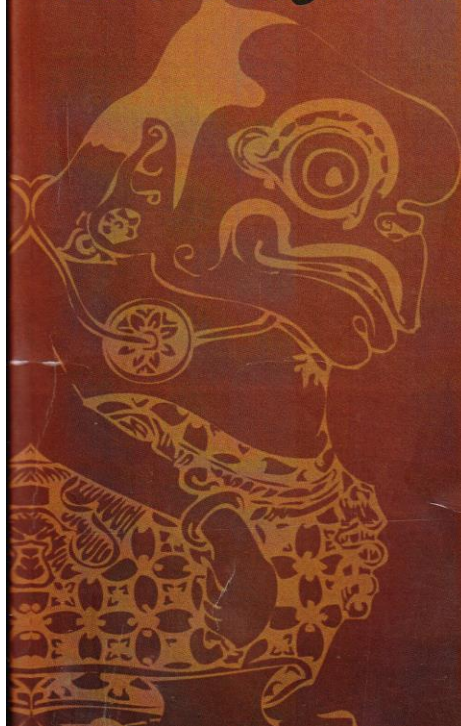The 7ᵗʰ COTEFL International Conference
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THE USE OF WEBLOG WITH FACEBOOK LOGIN FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN AN ENGLISH WRITING CLASS: A PRACTICAL MODEL

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Abstract

The paper reports a research and development (R&D) type of study which devised a teacher's weblog for portfolio assessment in an English as a foreign language (EFL) writing class. As previous research suggests, portfolio assessment is effective to improve students' writing performance (Nezakatgoo, 2011), and has a positive effect on language learning and writing ability (Taki, 2011). A model of weblog with facebook login was designed and used as a virtual medium in which students could post their writing works; the drafts, the revised and the final versions. In this way, their works are accessible not only for the teacher and their peers but also the public as well. The teacher and students could also write comments as feedbacks for improvement of the drafts. The students taking *Writing 3* at English Education Department of Sultan Agung Islamic University (UNISSULA) Semarang participated as the subjects of the study. At the end of the semester, the data on the effectiveness of the model were collected by a four scale of Likert-like questionnaire and were analyzed descriptively. The students found that the model has many advantages over paper-based portfolio as it is more practical, easily accessible and encourages them to better prepare the writing.

Keywords: *portfolio assessment, weblog, facebook login, writing class.*

Introduction

Recently, portfolio-based writing assessment has attracted interests of many writing teachers especially in the context of ESL or EFL writing. This kind of alternative assessment which was introduced as a reaction against the psychometric model of assessment is considered to have more advantages over a single-timed test as it gives students more sense of control and authority as well as ownership over their work. With portfolio, students have more opportunity to review their writing and decide which pieces of writing the students like to present to their teacher and what they expect their teacher to see from their writings (Park, 2010).

The popularity of portfolio as an alternative for writing assessment since 1980 is for two reasons. The first is the dissatisfaction of timed impromptu writing test. Writing is a complex and multifaceted activity which involves not only the macro skills as planning, organization of ideas, choice of genre etc., but also the micro skill as spelling, mechanics, and word choices. Assessing student's writing competence only by a single-timed test in which students sit in a classroom for examination for 2 hours in the end of a semester is considered to be inadequate because it cannot really reflect the complexity of the process of writing. Harmer (2007) suggests that a single time test or sometimes referred as a "sudden death test" doesn't give a true picture of how well students could do in certain situation. Assessing student writing competency by looking at different pieces of writing works over a period of time is fairer. Secondly, there has been a shift in the approach on teaching writing from product approach to process approach. Process approach suggests that it is not a good idea for a learner to write a draft of a composition and

submit it to the teacher for grading (Cohen, 2001), instead, teachers need to see the process, even get involved in the process of students' writing for example by giving feedbacks for the improvement of the drafts.

With the development of internet technology –the information and communication technology (ICT) especially- the traditional paper-based portfolio has shifted to electronic or digital portfolio –the e-portfolio- which gives both teacher and students more flexibility in terms of collection, revision, and feedback provision. Students don't need to come to campus or see the teacher to collect the writing work but send it to the teacher by internet. Revision and feedback provision can be done anytime and anywhere without having to print or reprint the drafts. Technology has made e-portfolio become more cost-efficient as free internet services can now reach more schools, universities, students, and teachers.

With the background presented above, then, the paper presents a model of using of weblogs for portfolio assessment writing in EFL writing context and discusses the effectiveness of it to improve the quality of students' writing.

Review of Related Literature
Writing as a Process
With the shift of EFL/ESL writing instruction from product approach to process approach, writing instructors now focus not only the finished product but also the writing process which covers 4 stages. The first stage is planning. When planning, writers think, read, and collect information necessary for the topics they are writing; they brainstorm the topics, jot ideas, make list of WH questions and their tentative answers, etc. This is usually called as pre-writing stage. In doing so, Harmer (2004) suggest that the writers think of three important issues. First, they have to think of the purpose of their writing since this will influence not only the type of text they wish to produce as descriptive, narrative, procedure etc., but also the language they use, and the information they choose to include. Secondly, writers have to think of the audience they are writing for, since this will influence not only the shape of the writing but also the choice of language –whether it is formal or informal in tone for example. Thirdly, writers have to consider the content structure of the piece – that is how best to sequence the facts, ideas or arguments which they have decided to include.

The second step of writing process is drafting. This is the stage where writer puts ideas and information he wishes to share in tentative sentences and paragraphs which means that there will be changes as deletion or addition of information, reorganization ideas, even the change of the topic. The focus in drafting is usually more on the fluency of ideas rather than the accuracy of grammar and spelling. The following stage is revising or editing. Seow (2002) says that revising occurs when writers look back at their work, by considering comments or suggestions from their teachers and peers. The writers will also measure the effectiveness of their communication to the audience they are targeting. While Harmer (2004) mentions that editing means reflecting. The last stage is writing the final version. In this stage the writers produce the final version. Checking grammar and spelling accuracies, punctuations, and word choices usually becomes the main task to be done at this stage.

However, it must be kept in mind that even though writing is process, the process may not be linear. It is more recursive actually as writers may plan, draft, edit or revise and then re-plan, re-draft, re-edit before finally have the final work. Seow describes this process from Process Activated to Process terminated, while Harmer describes it as the Process Wheel.

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio is an alternative approach to writing assessment that emphasizes the composing process, learner independence and self-reflective capacity (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000). It is a cumulative collection of work learners have done from beginning of the semester to the end (Johnson, 1996) which documents students' effort, progress and achievement in their learning (Yang, 2003), and is analyzed with regard to instructional objectives (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). The primary purposes of portfolios in EFL context are to increase the level of students' motivation and to give them a sense autonomous learning. It also has benefits of developing learning, supporting self-assessment and self monitor of their own learning, fostering students' reflection (Madden T. , 2007), as well as encouraging students to have collaborative work since portfolios are created collaboratively by the student him /herself, the teacher and other students. The student will be the author the work, while teacher and other students will work as partners who may give responses, advice and feedback for the improvement of the work before it is submitted for final grading.

There are two systems of portfolio writing class namely working portfolio and showcase portfolio which each of them involves at least four steps of collection, selection, reflection, and delayed evaluation (Lam, 2013). In working portfolio, collection phase involves writing the first draft, doing self evaluation, making revision, writing the second draft etc. In selection phase, the writer reviews all the drafts and considers the strengths and weaknesses of their writing work, before he makes reflection –as the next phase- when he reflects upon achievements made in the portfolio, and finally he submits the works to the teacher for evaluation and grading. The phases in working portfolio are the same as the ones in showcase portfolio except in the selection phase, in which the writer selects only one or two best drafts to be submitted to the teacher for comments and other feedbacks before he can make any kinds of revision. In all systems, grade is only given to the final products of writing.

Previous studies as by Nezakatgoo (2011), Taki & Heidari (2011), Syafei (2012) found that portfolio assessment is positive. Nezakatgoo found that portfolio assessment empowers students more because they are able to repeatedly reflect and improve previously written papers and select their best papers for final grading. There was a significant correlation between the portfolio method of writing and assessment and student final scores. In addition, Taki & Heidari found that the scores of writing assessment in the experimental group was significantly higher than the ones in the control group after the experimental group was treated using portfolio model of assessment. While Syafei found that positive backwash effect on learning. Students thought that portfolio gives them more time to read, to prepare, to write and to revise their writing work which in turn to encourage them to be more autonomous, disciplined, and more confident in writing.

However, it is necessary to be kept in mind that portfolio-based assessment also poses some pitfalls as Harmer (2007) suggests. Portfolio is time consuming, in some way it will give more work to do to the teachers; it requires more training and practice for teachers so that the implementation of portfolio can fully benefit students; the plan sometimes does not work as it is expected to because students leave the portfolio till the end of the course; and the issue of originality in the sense that in doing the writing tasks, students may be helped by others.

e-Portfolio

The term e-portfolio or electronic portfolio is used to denote portfolio which exists in the digital form and may or may not be able to be printed (Trevitt, Macduff, & Steed, 2014). E-portfolio has been gaining ground in recent years as the skills needed to create digital contents are becoming less complex. Software and applications are now available and this has made preparing writing works on digital form easier and more interesting. With e-portfolio, students do not need to print their writing drafts and submit them to the teacher. Instead, they post them on the weblogs or other networking tools as facebook, twitter etc. As many previous studies suggest, social network tools support educational activities by making interaction, developing learning autonomy, building connectivity and interaction between students and teachers and among students, therefore, fostering better relationship (Selwyn, 2007).

There are some kinds of e-portfolios as pebble pad based portfolio, web-based portfolio, facebook-based portfolio, and wiki and weblog-based portfolio. Pebble pad-based portfolio is an e-portfolio system which is used most commonly as a personal digital repository in which students store evidence of performance-based competencies. It supports reflection, and acts as a personal and communal learning environment in which students create evidence of attainment through collaboration with others. Web-based portfolio is good to solve the problem of storage because every individual teacher or student may have his / her own weblog with different capacity to store their works and other artifacts. With web-based portfolio, anyone in the world can be granted access to the web folio, and students can have perfect control on what artifacts can be presented. Facebook-based portfolio is created by using facebook group in which the students write on the wall and other students may give feedback by comments or just likening. A useful feature of this kind of portfolio is that the work can be tagged and also shared very easily.

Like paper portfolios, e-portfolios stress the importance of both process and presentation. While a paper portfolio is often a static document, e-portfolios can continue to evolve and change over time, more significantly they resolve the problems inherent in paper-based portfolios such as accessibility, scalability, and flexibility. E-portfolios create a space appropriate for multimodal texts. Another benefit of e-portfolios over paper-based portfolio is e-portfolio can better lead learners' creative thinking to reflect on many ways in which their experiences have helped deep learning created by critical analysis of ideas and linking them to and real-world experiences which can result in fostering students' ability to retain information longer so that the knowledge can be used in solving problems within different contexts (Holtzman & Dagavarian, 2007).

Method
Research Design and Setting
Basically, the study adopted Research and Development (R & D) model suggested by Gall (1983) which involves planning where needs were identified and assessed, model development where model to address needs and problems were developed, field testing to see whether or not model could satisfy the expectation, and finally evaluation for improvement. The study was conducted in the odd semester of 2014/2015 during the course of *Writing 3* which focuses on genre writing. In the course students were taught how to write different types of texts as description, recount, narrative, procedure, news item. The students met once a week for 90 minutes, and for assessment, portfolio was adopted. Every week, students were required to write or revise their drafts and submit them to the teacher.

The Model

As needs were identified, a model of e-portfolio was designed and used as a virtual medium in which students could post their writing works and other artifacts to demonstrate their competence. Since the majority of the students, did not have personal blogs, therefore, it was decided that the class would use the teacher's weblog. The problem was then how to give access to students so that they could login the weblog and posted their work. Facebook group was an option, however, facebook has many different topics and statuses posted on the wall which in some way will distract the focus of the portfolio. Finally, a model of weblog-based portfolio using facebook login was adopted. Weblog with facebook log in lets the teacher as the administrator or owner of the blog to log in using his username and password, it also lets the students log in by using their facebook account. The front page of the blog is as the following:


Picture 1: A front page of a weblog with facebook login.

If the sign of facebook Login is clicked and required information is fulfilled, students will have access to the dashboard so that they can post their writing works; the drafts, the revised and the final versions, and make them accessible not only for the teacher and their peers but also the public as well. Students and anyone who can successfully login, will have their names automatically listed as authors, and a number showing how many writing works already been posted in the weblog will appear behind it, as in the following picture. The name of an author in the same time acts as a working folder which, when it is clicked, will display all the posts he /she has already made.

Picture 2: weblog authors

To make sharing easy, the weblog can be equipped with **+Share** feature which will enable the authors to share the posts to other social media as Facebook, Twitter Blogger, Google, or even emails. While for feedbacks, teacher and students can do it by writing on the comment box or, when the writing is shared to Facebook, by using facebook comment.
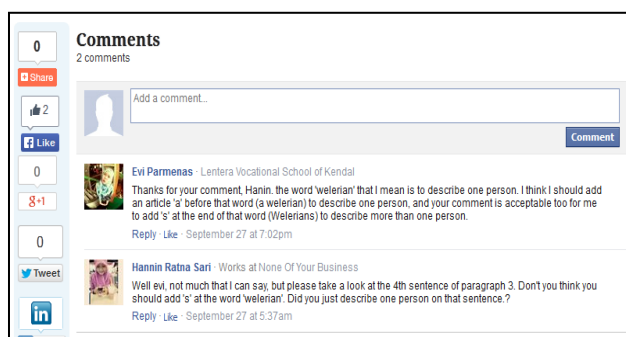
Picture 3: Example of comment

The Participants

The model was field tested in Group E1 and E2 of *Writing 3* course of English Education Department of Sultan Agung Islamic University (UNISSULA) Semarang. Total number of thirty seven students participated in the course. They wrote drafts and posted them on the weblog using their facebook login, provided comments for their peer writing, wrote revision, and submitted the final drafts for grading.

Finding

In the end of the semester, Likert-like questionnaires were distributed to the participants to collect data on the effectiveness of the model. The students were required to rate statements in the questionnaire in 4 scales from **1: Absolutely Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3:Agree, and 4: Absolutely Agree**. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements to measure students' perception about the adoption of portfolio for writing assessment and the use of the model as the virtual media to implement portfolio.

Concerning the adoption of portfolio-based assessment, the students believe that portfolio-based assessment was better than one-time test. The mean score for this statement was 3.3 on the scale 1 to 4. According to the students, the writing works that they produced in portfolio-based assessment were better than the ones produced under one-time test (3.22). It is because among others 1) portfolio gives students more time to prepare (3.32), and they can work collaboratively with other students (3,43.). When the students were asked to rate negative statements as portfolio consumes too much time, portfolio-based assessment doesn't result in better writing work, and "I prefer one-timed test to portfolio-based assessment", the results of the mean score were relatively low. That portfolio consumes too much time was rated 2.43. the following statement was rated 1.97, and the last statement was rated 1.78. The findings of the study support other previous studies as Syafei (2012) which suggests that portfolio has more advantages over a single-time test.

In relation to the use of weblog with facebook login for portfolio assessment, students found that it was more practical than submitting the print-out paper (3.49). They were happy to see their writing posted on the weblog and accessible for other persons, and they were confident enough to have them. Another positive effect of having students' works posted on the weblog was students would prepare their writing as well as possible admitting that their works may be read by more people from different groups and level. The mean score for this statement was

3.49. The students were also positive with the practice of e-portfolio since they enjoyed reading their peers' work and could learn from them.

For peer feedback provision, the data of the questionnaire suggested that they liked to share comments as feedbacks for their peer works and thought that the comments were useful for the improvement of the draft. Theoretically, both the writer of the draft and the learner who provides feedback could benefit the practice this practice (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The writer will be able to improve their writing, while the feedback provider will stimulate students to learn and know more about writing since she/he must be able to judge the draft based on certain criteria. To do so, students must first learn the issue requiring feedbacks, be critical and objective. This in turn will help improve his/her own writing performance.

Conclusion

Portfolio-based assessment for writing course is an alternative assessment which from time to time gets better recognition both from teachers and students. It improves among other the learning itself, collaborative work, and autonomy. Students also perceive this kind of assessment positive and can facilitate them to have better writing products. A teacher weblog with facebook login can be an alternative of e-portfolio especially when students do not have their own weblogs for their portfolio. Students can login the teacher's weblog by using their facebook username and password. Students will be granted limited access to the dashboard of the weblog so they can post the writing work and wait for comments either from the teacher or peers.

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