USING TWITTER TO TEACH WRITING FOR BEGINNING LEVEL OF EFL (ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE) STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

Penggunaan *Twitter* dapat melatih siswa EFL agar mampu mengembangkan imaginasi dan berkomunikasi secara tulisan dalam bahasa Inggris. *Twitter* adalah layanan jaringan sosial online dan layanan *micro blogging* yang memungkinkan penggunanya untuk mengirim dan membaca pesan berbasis teks hingga 140 karakter, yang dikenal sebagai *"tweets"*. Dalam kegiatan ini, siswa dapat menyampaikan idenya dan menuangkan imaginasinya melalui *Twitter* dengan menuliskan kalimat bahasa Inggris sederhana. Kegiatan ini merupakan kegiatan yang rileks, gembira dan mengasyikan. Media ini juga diharapkan dapat bermanfaat bagi para guru atau pengajar bahasa Inggris, sehingga memperkaya mereka akan teknik pengajaran menulis.

Kata kunci: Twitter, teaching writing, teaching for EFL students.

A. Introduction

English has four skills that have to be learned. They are reading, listening, speaking and writing. Each skill is related to each other. Among the four skills, writing is one of the important skills that has to be mastered. According to Rosidi (2009) writing is an activity to extend ideas, thoughts, and feeling of person which is expressed in written cycle. We can say that writing is an activity to convey ideas to the readers in written language to make them understand.

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However, writing is not as easy as people think. There are some reasons why writing becomes the difficult skill. According to Abdullah (2011) the effective writers are noted for having a range of vocabulary, getting the grammar right, punctuating meaningfully, spelling accurately, using a range of sentence structures, and linking information across sentences to develop the topic, developing and organizing the content clearly and convincingly. It means that the writer should master these six things at above. If the writer can master these six things, the readers can understand and there will be no misunderstanding.

In teaching writing for EFL students, there are some problems that are faced by students. For examples; sentence structures, dictions, coherency, and etc. Dealing with EFL students' motivation, they sometimes are faced to a barrier that can keep them from learning. Also, the students are still not able to make a good simple sentence. They often make mistakes. Therefore, teachers need to find the interesting way to remove those educational obstacles so that your EFL students can learn and grow. One of the ways that can be used as an interesting tool for teaching writing is social media.

Bland and Koppel (1988) points out "Writing is a tool of thinking". It means that writing is an activity to express issues, ideas, events, feeling or thinking to the others through written form. Teacher will generally agree that the beginning EFL students need to learn the basic conventions of writing. This includes being able to identify and write letters, words, and simple sentences, as well as learning to spell and punctuate.

Twitter is a kind of micro blogging system that provides the users to write on 140 characters. It becomes one of the famous social media which is loved by people with all ages over the world. *Twitter* is used as a place to share hobbies, like/dislike, communities, films, activities, jokes, and other general conversations.

Through *twitter*, students can study writing fun. They will enjoy writing. They can express their ideas in simple sentences that have limited 140 characters. They will study relax, because *twitter* has become their daily activity. So, they will be motivated to write simple sentences on *twitter*. Also, they will not be bored because of boring exercises. By using *twitter*, students can get much up-to-date information, they can tell the news with their own words. It can be about films, celebrities, music, and etc. The teachers should be smart in choosing the theme and topic that will be written.

Mork (2009) stated that *Twitter* is a micro blogging system that limits users to posts of no more than 140 characters, which translates into one or at most three sentences. It means that the user has limitation to write. If the users want to write any longer sentences, they should make a new tweet.

On *twitter*, there are contents that users can use easily;

1. *Home*. It is a place to see tweets of people who are followed by the user.
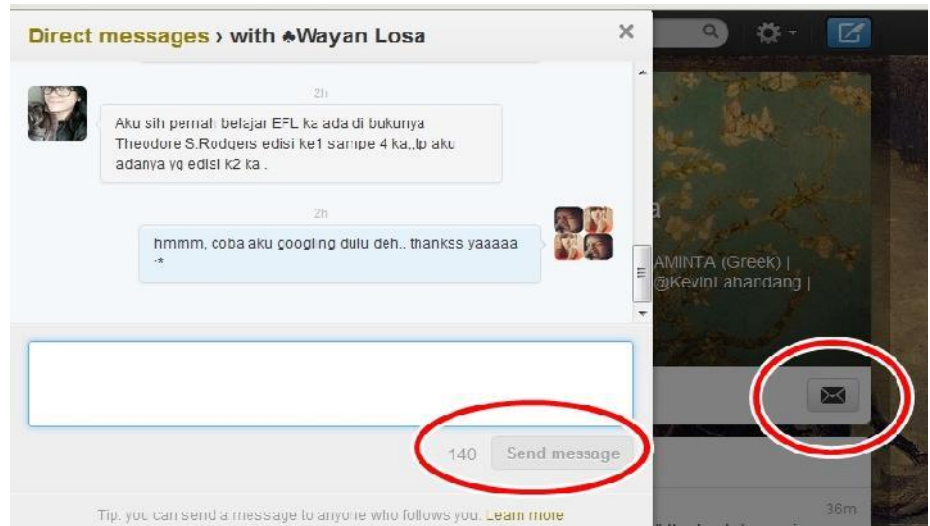
2. *Profile*. It's a place for personal data of the user and *tweets* that were ever written. The user also can put his/her picture as an *avatar*. Avatar is profile picture.

3. *Follower*. It's a number of friends who become the user's friends. They can keep track the user's tweets

4. *Following*. The user follows people's account to see their tweets.

5. *Follow Button.* It's the button to follow people's account. First, the user must open the person account that he/she wants to follow, after that the user click the "follow" button.

6. *Connect.* It's a place to see people who mention/ comment the user. She/he just needs to click the "connect" button, and she/he will see the people who mention him/her.

7. *Mention/Tweet*. It's a reply way to continue the conversation, so the user can directly reply to the other users that he/she tweets with. It should be followed with "@".

This Picture explains number 2 until number 7

8. *Direct Message (DM).* It's also called private message. This message can't be seen by other users. It's similar with mention/ tweet, the user can only write on 140 characters.

9. *Hashtag (#).* It's symbol that is used to talk about a certain topic. It's used to make the other users can find a certain topic which is written by the other users.

10. *Trending topic*. It's a topic that is being popular and talked by many people in the same time. Trending Topic usually is different for each country. If the user wants to see trending topics in another country, he/she can click "change" button to choose what country he/she asks for.

Twitter can be surprisingly useful educational tool. According to Messieh (2011) *Twitter* gives students and teacher easy way to communicate that goes beyond office hours and classrooms. By using a simple hashtag (#), students and teacher can easily inform and communicate their tweet for specific topic. Teacher can make the topic lesson by hashtag (#). Hashtag can make students easy to find each other on *Twitter*.

It can be concluded that *Twitte*r can be used as a tool to improve student's writing. *Twitter* can help students to improve their writing skill. *Twitter* is easy to use and the students will enjoy learning writing.
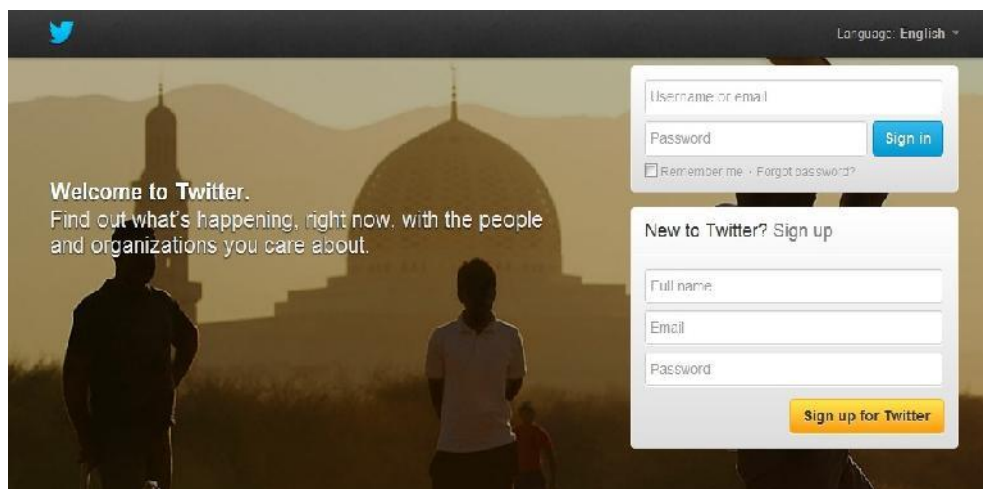
B. Discussion

In teaching writing skill, the teacher faces some problems dealing with the students, media and techniques of teaching. To overcome these problems, the teacher must be able to find and create appropriate ways that can be used in teaching process. One of the ways that can be used in teaching writing is by using *Twitter*.

A. *Preparation for the activity*

Before starting to use *Twitter* in the classroom, teacher makes sure that the course has the appropriate facilities that teachers and students need. The Facilities that will be needed are computer/laptop and internet connection and the electricity. This media is limited for the private schools or institutes. In private schools, this media is used for an additional subject. This media only can be used for the private schools which have the adequate facilities.

The function of this media is to teach English as an additional subject in the school. If the teacher teaches in the institutes, this media can be used in the main learning time. *Twitter* is not easy to be applied at any schools/ institutes. As we know that, not all of regions in Indonesia get the good internet connection. *Twitter* can be used at the school/instates which provides the internet connection and computers. If the schools or institutes do not have the facilities that the teachers/students need, the authorities must consider how to get the facilities because *Twitter* is a good way to teach writing.

Also, the teacher can prepare the easy topics. For example; hobbies, likes/dislikes, daily activities, films, jokes, and other general conversations. And then, the learning process is usually about 45- 60 minutes, so the teacher should make his/her account, first. It's better to the teacher to tell the students to have a *twitte*r account before the class started. So, the previous day, teacher has already told the students to sign up on twitter. ***https://twitter.com/*** .

Also, the teacher gives his/her nickname. In order to be followed by the students. Moreover, after every student has made a twitter account and followed the teacher's account, the learning process is ready to do.

The procedures done in preparation on as follows:

a. The teacher greets the students by formal greeting such as; Good Morning!

b. The teacher asks the students to say one word started by the first character in their name when the teacher calls their name. Every student may not say the same word.

c. The teacher prepares the classroom, the computers, and the internet connection.

d. The teacher gives the motivation to the students such as giving the announcement that the topic today will become one of the topics that will come to the final semester.

e. The teacher gives instruction to students about the topic in that meeting.

f. The important thing, the students have already been asked to sign in to their twitter.

g. The students must follow the teacher.

h. Students are better to follow each other.

B. *The Procedure of Teaching Writing By Using Twitter to Beginning Level of EFL Students*

The procedure to teach writing by using *Twitter* for EFL Students is easy. As we know, the activities in teaching and learning process are divided into four stages:

In building knowledge (BKOF), the teacher will explain about the topic. For example; the topic is about hobbies. The teacher can tell his/her hobbies to the students. After that, the teacher will build the knowledge of the students about their hobbies. The teacher can call the student's name and ask what his/her hobby is. And do it for other students. As a result, the students will know the kinds of hobbies.

In modeling (MOT), the teacher asks the students to focus on their "*home twitter*". And then, the teacher gives examples of sentences to be tweeted on

twitter. The teacher asks the students to pay attention how to write on twitter. The students should pay attention to the sentence that teacher wrote and its *hashtag* (#). Teacher explains to the students that the *hashtag* (#) is used to mark the topic that are learned. The below example shows that the *hashtag* is about **#hobbies.** The teacher can give two or three examples of tweets.

In this activity, the students have to make their own sentences in maximum 140 characters. Students can use it for making simple sentences. The points that will be counted by teacher are grammar, punctuation, the choice of vocabulary, spelling and the range of sentence structures. After they write their own sentences in the 140 characters box, they tweet it. And it will automatically be read by the followers.

While, in join constractions (JCOT), the students sit on group or in pairs to make paragrapgh. Teacher can ask each group to make a simple paragraph that tells about their hobby. Because of the limited characters on *twitter*, the students

can make more than one tweet. The students can use #hobbies2 to explain that it is the second exercise. Because the students have each account, they can write in each their own account.

So, While they are working, the teacher comes around them and helps them if they get the difficulties. After making sentences, the pairs or group tell the teacher that they have done.

In independent contraction (ICOT), this is the last of the procedures of teaching writing by using *twitter*. In this activity, a teacher tries to evaluate the students' ability. They have the students do their writing ability. After doing continously, the teacher will know whether they understand or not. The students will seem that they understand or not. There are two ways to measure the student's ability.

The two points are as follows: first, inviting the students to discuss about their friend's sentences. However, a teacher must try to measure the students' ability toward their writing ability. After the students tweet their own sentences; the teachers should discuss it. This discussion is very useful to make the students know their difficulties in doing their own sentences, and a teacher gives the students opportunity to express about the difficulties that they found. This activity

is used to check the students' understand and help the teacher to know how far the students can catch the lesson by tweeting.

C. The Advantages of Using Twitter

Twitter is a great way to teach English. There are some advantages that will be got by the teachers and students if they use *twitter* as media to learn English.

First, *twitter* is easy to use. Most of people use *twitter* nowadays, so they will not feel difficult when using *twitte*r as media to teach writing. They will feel enjoy it.

Second, *twitter* can encourage the students to focus on the material that they are studying carefully. The process of teaching writing by using *twitter* makes the students happy because they do it like their daily activity.

Third, this media also can increase the student's interests. The students will think hard when they want to tweet. They will make and choose the sentences they want. Also, *twitter* will fix their spelling, punctuation and vocabularies. In additional, this activity is kind of interesting tasks, such as making sentences to tell hobbies, like and dislikes, daily activity, films,music, selebrities, and etc.

Fourth, *twitter* also can be used as a reminder of homework. Teacher can make tweets about homework or assignments.

Fifth, learn a language. Using *Twitte*r in a language class involves a certain level of trust that your students will not resort to *Google Translate*. That said, it's

a great way to see how fast students can translate a short sentence after it has been tweeted.

Sixth, brainstorming. *Twitter* can be a great brainstorming tool that students and teachers can share ideas and information any time they want, regardless of location. For example, teacher will give a topic about "food and drinks". So, the students can share their favorite food and drinks on their *twitter*. To find the tweets, the students should put the tweets with **#FOODANDDRINKS**

Seventh, as long as students are held accountable for their grammar, using *Twitter* offers a great opportunity for improving writing and punctuations. Also, Students can tweet past tense, run on sentences, compound sentences, and more. After that, the teacher will correct it.

The last, through *twitter*, students can write a short review of movies, books, and music that they have enjoyed (or not). In additional, *twitter* can be used as school trip tracking: Whether it is a field trip or a long journey, students can log and track their progress on a school trip using *Twitter*.

C. Conclusion and Suggestions

1. Conclusions.

In the process of learning, teacher and students can get information quickly and fun by getting information and communication technology, one of them is Social network. The example of social network usage in learning is by using *twitter*. Using *twitter* as a teaching media is very helping teachers. Students will be more interested and active in learning. With this way, students are trained to be responsible, active, and independent, in solving the problem. It develops learning strategies, and especially *twitter* improves student's writing skill in using English. So, students can use their time to the positive way.

2. Suggestion.

1. It is hoped that the teacher must be creative in choosing topic on *twitter*. Teacher should determine the suitable topic with the age and level of the students.

2. Teacher must give motivation to students to write by making them enjoy in the classroom.

3. Teacher should not too much blame the students when they make a mistake. It will decrease their self confidence.

4. Teacher should give rewards to the student's work. For example: hang their pictures on the wall in the classroom, tell the adoration to them.

5. Teacher can be friends with the students.

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