TWITTER AS A TOOL IN ENHANCING WRITING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

The usage of social media among millennial generation not only restricted to socializing, but also for learning. This study aimed to identify students’ perception of using Twitter in enhancing their ESL writing skill and also to incorporate Twitter in enhancing students’ writing skill. This study followed a quasi-experimental research design. A group of 15 students of secondary school in Pahang was chosen to be the sample of the study. The instrument of the study was an ESL writing test. The students were pre-tested on their writing skills using the ESL writing test where they need to write a short essay of a given topic. Then, they were asked to tweet another short essay by using Twitter of a given topic. The result of the study suggests students are more favorable in using Twitter for writing and it is more effective in enhancing students’ writing skill.

Keywords: social media, twitter, writing skill, ESL

INTRODUCTION

Mobile technologies, Internet and social media have become social phenomenon especially among young adults age 18 to 29 or also known as the Millennial generation (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010, cited in Yusop & Sumari, 2013). Young people use media because, they find them fun, exciting and imaginative and because they experience learning through the media. Young people are often fascinated by these new media technologies that offer them thrilling encounters and understanding of the social, cultural and moral facets of the adult world (Baboo et. al, 2013).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TWITTER

It is undeniable that the usage of social media among millennial generation is highly engaged. Social media not only as a platform of interaction among its users, but has evolved into as another means of learning. Social media offer students, of all ages, opportunities to interact and post user-generated content whilst also providing members with opportunities to take the content and remix it (Casey & Wells, 2015).

Twitter is one of the Web 2.0 tools, which allows for the sharing of messages. Twitter users are able to post direct and indirect updates (Cohen & Duchan, 2012). Harmandaoglu (2012) defined Twitter as a microblogging service that allows users to communicate with others by posting brief messages that describe their current status. As cited by Harmandaoglu (2012) in ‘The Use of Twitter in Language Learning and Teaching’, Twitter can allow them to boost task-based learning (Dervin, 2009), interactivity and collaborative learning which encourage the students to “achieve common learning goals by working together rather than with the teacher” (Macaro, 1997).

Casey and Wells (2015) conducted an action research among high school students focusing on integration of Web 2.0, called as ‘Ning’. The findings from the teacher reflection data confirmed that students were, generally, very engaged with class projects involving social and participatory media and that students were, generally, interested in the work of their peers. As each semester progressed and through the action research cycle, this engagement, interaction and interest in the work of peers developed into a more structured peer-feedback and peer-assessment process being implemented in each class group.
THE CURRENT STUDY

Students in the 21st century have been highly engaged with technology, specifically social media. The usage of various social media platforms has changed how knowledge can readily be acquired online. In order to catch up and adapt with the fast-pace of recent technology, teachers have been highly encouraged to embed and incorporate the usage of ICT in the teaching and learning process. Since Web 2.0 is now increasingly being leveraged as a popular study tool, shifting the teaching and learning tools from the traditional tools to social networking tools can allow better and effective teaching and learning process to take place.

One of the social media platforms that has been chosen for this study is the Twitter application. Twitter is a micro blogging site that allow users to generate their own content with a limit of 140-character. The main feature of Twitter is to share short messages in a written form and to share the messages among its users. In order to help students use social media for more personalized and collaborative studying, Twitter acts as a communicating tool outside of the classroom. Writing through Twitter encourages students to express their ideas collaboratively. Therefore, this study is conducted to help students to collaborate and communicate through writing by using Twitter.

Hence, this study is aimed to investigate:

(i) The incorporation of Twitter ESL classroom of enhancing students’ writing skill
(ii) Students’ perception of using Twitter in enhancing writing skill

DATA COLLECTION

The study is a quasi – experimental research. A total number of 15 students were used for the study. All the subjects were drawn from a rural secondary school, which is located in a district in Pahang. The subjects are classified with average proficiency level of English. There were 6 male students and 9 female students that aged 16 years old. They have been exposed to English language ever since Standard One and learned English in school as their second language. The respondents are required to write a simple paragraph of a given topic both on a piece of paper and on their Twitter account. The data were then collected at the end of the session and analyzed.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed qualitatively. Their short essays were marked and their writings were compared in terms of grammatical error and sentence structure.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information

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<thead>
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<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>15</td>
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Table 1 Demographic Information
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**Incorporation of Twitter ESL Classroom of Enhancing Students’ Writing Skill**

The short essays written by the students were analyzed in terms of grammatical errors and also the sentence structure. The essays written on a piece of paper showed that majority of the students did a lot of spelling errors and grammatical errors. The sentence structure of their written essays consisted of simple and compound sentences.

Then, the short essays tweeted by the students on their Twitter account were analyzed. The total number of tweets posted by the all students of one short essay is around 12 to 15 tweets. The essays tweeted by the students showed that there is a decrease number of spelling errors and grammatical errors made by them. However, the sentence structure of their short essays are mostly consisted of simple sentences.

The decrease of number of spelling errors and grammatical errors were because of some students made extra effort to check their spellings, and their grammar tenses online before posting the tweets on their Twitter accounts. Hence, allowing the students to self-correct and aid their learning by using the social media.

**Students’ Perception of Using Twitter in Enhancing Writing Skill**

Based on the responses given by the students on their perceptions of using twitter in writing lesson, all of the students provided positive and good feedbacks. All of them agree that they feel more encouraged to write (to tweet) the essay. They feel very excited when they are able to complete their assignment online by using their smartphones.

Moreover, the students also claimed that by tweeting their essays online, it increases their communication and collaboration among themselves. The students were able to interact more with their friends through the ‘retweet’ button, ‘mention’ button, ‘like’ button and ‘reply’ button. Apart from that, the students were also able to share and view their peers’ essays that they have tweeted. These findings are further supported by Cohen & Duchan (2012) that says Twitter enables communication at anytime and anywhere, creating the potential for learning beyond the classroom. The findings drawn from this study is similar to Hamad, Embi & Hassan (2012), in that social media is designed to enhance interaction, communication and sharing between users.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, social networking environment promote greater levels of student motivation and engagement, and enable students to use higher order thinking (Casey & Wells, 2015). The interaction on Twitter allows for the 21st century skills to be practiced, which are creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration. This is essential to prepare students for the future.
REFERENCES


