The Needs of Assistive Technology on Students' EFL Writing

[1]Dwi Sloria Suharti, [2]Eka Ugi Sutikno

[1,2]Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, Cikokol, Tangerang, Banten,

E-mail: dwisloria@umt.ac.id

Abstract

Nowadays generally, technology encompasses all aspects of modern life and particularly, the writing by using English language. The challenges of learning English writing in Indonesia are plenty as English is perceived as a Foreign Language. This paper aims to reveal tertiary level students' perception and attitude towards their technology aptitude: usage models, noticed benefits of and challenges to employ technology in learning English as Foreign Language (EFL) writing. This is a qualitative research, a case study, and used a self-structured questionnaire and interview to collect the data. Two participant lecturer observers and one hundred and sixty-seven students in a private college in Tangerang were purposively selected thirty students for questionnaire and interview. The data were carried out to reveal the lecturers and students' perspective of assistive technology in EFL writing. The results revealed that assistive technology such as *Webbing/ Blogs*, Computer software, *Social Media* apps, *YouTube* channel, smart phone and tablet apps are found to be used by EFL learners to learn EFL Writing. Yet, most of the students had constraint at bad Internet connection. The outcome of this study offers thinkable instructional suggestions for students' EFL Writing and creates base for further studies in this area.

Keywords: Students' EFL Writing, Learning EFL Writing, Assistive Technology

INTRODUCTION

Writing in university such as writing essays is a benchmark for students' language skills. Learning English writing, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is one of the language skills that need to be practiced intensively. EFL Writing has been taught following the necessities of students for their future. Because EFL writing requires a complex thought process. However writing at the level of higher education requires very logical reasoning, so as to others can understand what students want to convey. Thus, they must be able to arouse their ideas then put them into a good writing and correct grammar.

Various types of strategies have also being introduced increasingly with easy, interesting and effective learning objectives. Nowadays, the role of technology in learning English, particularly learning EFL writing is principal as information technology holds all aspects of modern life. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) role in teaching and learning of EFL encourages; 1) learner-centered, self-directed, and organized learning directed to increase independence of students as language learners; 2) creative and interactive work; 3) direct feedback; 4) teacher to update content continuously; 5) distributions the roles of teacher and learner; 6) faster access to attain materials (Ravichandran, 2000; Marzban, 2008; Hartoyo, 2012). Teaching EFL can take advantage from functioning a computer. The computers' application in the learning activity augments people to learn language. Undoubtedly, a computer is a tool that abridges people in learning a language, while the efficacy of learning varies entirely on the users (Richards and Renandya, 2002; Hartoyo, 2006).

Even though the potencies of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) can offer motivation and independence for learner, comfortable learning style and time adjustable learning, innovative and collaborative work, fast feedback, teacher informing content of teaching materials, portions the roles of teacher and learner and, easy access to reach materials, yet, a number of interests must be agreed to the limitations of CALL, for instance less handy equipment, in reading a long text is more problematic and tiring due to low resolution screens, high cost of education, lack of skillful teachers as well as inadequate assisting teaching function which directs lacking facility of computers to manage with unexpected conditions (Fang, 2010; Hartoyo, 2012).

Webbing believes as new ways of running individual research for it suggests numerous resources of experts and it is new devices to look for information. According to many language specialists, this designates the Web's utility in positioning an amount of information at the hands of individual users all around the world. Thus, the Web has expanded language learning elsewhere the classroom and resources of English learning in the kind of visual, audio and written materials have been conveyed collectively and issued online (Warschauer,

M., & Ware, M., 2008; Crook, et.al., 2008; Zeng, 2018). However, the usual situation of English language teaching and learning in Indonesia is unsupportive, respecting to the realization assistive technology on students' EFL writing. Most of them are traditional and passive teaching learning practices, using this technology. And kinds of teaching learning EFL controlled lecture-based teaching ensue the model in Indonesia's school culture where students are in a submissive role, restricted to learn English writing and rehearsing it. According to Lie (2007), there is a failure opinion in TEFL in Indonesia. Though English subject is taught and used as a foreign language in Indonesia, and even after spent so many hours in learning English, the results are disappointing. An Indonesian student applies plenty hours learning English before becoming into University. Yet, He cannot correlate in English both speaking nor writing. Therefore the necessity to comprehend the students' perception of the use of assistive technology in learning EFL writing, specially refers to prospects and problems, is required.

It is not an easy task to learn EFL writing (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014), yet it is significant. However many EFL students encounter many difficulties that defecate them from building suitable EFL Writing (Belkhir and Benyelles, 2017). Nevertheless, assistive technology based language learning can encourage their efficacy to learn EFL writing. Technology provides boundless sources to language learners. The utilization of appropriate technological resources can be beneficial for learners as Clements and Sarama (2003) asserted. Furthermore using computer-based language activities develop cooperative learning in learners (Harmer, 2007). And what to add is educators should support learners to discover suitable activities by using computer technology so as to be effective in language learning (Harmer, 2007 and Gençlter, 2015).

The use of digital libraries and thesauri has facilitated quicker learning and has substantially improved learners' vocabularies, as vocabulary learning believed as an essential part in foreign language learning (Alqahtani, 2015), The use of technology is necessary because technological advancements have led to breaking difficulties, and new domains have been explored within this global and informational age (Alsulami, 2016). Learning a language is a life-long process. Through multimedia with its variety of applications either online or offline

learners can access their lessons and information from anywhere and at any time. According to Lim and Oakley (2013), The application of computers, mobile technologies allow interaction through text messaging and approach to the Internet anywhere and every time one desires. And the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in one of private university in Tangerang has always been challenging because students fail to see its applicability to their proximate and future needs except for examination purposes.

Today technology is providing numerous opportunities and many countries are getting helped by it while the students are covering behind due to lack of awareness and knowledge in the use of technology, lack of technological facilities, lack of computer training at the primary level, lack of access to computers and Internet, and budget constraint. The objective of the study is to examine the perception of tertiary students in one of private university in Tangerang city towards the role of technology in enhancing learning EFL writing. It is expected that findings of this study will provide potential pedagogical implications for developing EFL writing learning and establish powdered for further research in this area. It is also expected that findings of this study will assist policy makers, curriculum planners, language educators and language learners in relevant ways.

The reviews of the literature on technology and learning English show that very few studies were conducted in countries like Indonesia that faces so many challenges like lack of necessary equipment, infrastructures, proper motivation and mind set of the students and so forth. In order to find out the students' perception of technology assisted language learning in Indonesia, some recent and past research findings have been compiled here to analyze different aspects of technology based learning of language. English language does not belong to any specific country or nation and the importance of learning English is the demand of time now.

Writing is a scientific product of a student studying in college. The quality of a student can even be seen from the writing product because in writing students involve a mental operation to interact with the writing steps such as designing, writing, editing the writing in an organized time. As Chokwe (2015) has said as

Flower and Hayes believed that writing product is actually the conceptual processes tangled when they interrelate repetitively: planning and generating knowledge, translating plans into speech, and proofreading or reviewing new idea or text built.

In practice, writing is an activity that is rarely in demand because of the difficulties faced by students. Several pedagogical suggestions can be drawn from the outcomes of this learning for EFL writing instruction (Villarreal and Gil-Sarratea, 2019). Educators or teachers tried to overcome these difficulties have promoted various approaches. There are three main approaches in writing, namely process approach, product approach and genre text approach (Gharabally, 2015). Based on the curriculum and syllabus, secondary schools in Indonesia writing and reading in English have used the genre approach. However, at the university the teacher can use various approaches and strategies.

Technological developments in learning have been started since the 1950s (Agullo, Juan, & Valejjo, 2015). Then it continued to grow and grow rapidly in the era of the 90s where the Internet began to be easily accessed by educators and participants. The first time a technology facility has introduced in the world of education was a computer called the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). After that teaching and learning begins to become a very dynamic thing and can be done from anywhere that is better known as m-learning or Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL).

The teacher's flexibility in using teaching-learning approaches and strategies can be used by the instructor to apply strategies that they think are better or more effective. In addition, Teachers can use developing technology as one of the strategies that can attract students' attention to improve their writing skills. Assistive Technology is one of the strategies that teachers can use in their teaching to help learners learn English skills, namely speaking and writing because Assistive Technology has devices or programs that support such as text-to speech software, word-processing programs, voice-recognition software, and organizing ideas software (Engstrom, 2005; Vakili and Ebadi, 2019). And Spell checker can aid to them to learn EFL writing well (Rimbar, 2017). In addition, digital Oxford dictionary, web based IELTS, pronounce or phonetics, and contraction rehearsal

believed to be able to aid to develop students' learning English properly. Technology consequently can be an unavoidable device for educators and learners since it can offer easiness and timeliness access. Employing digital documentations and dictionaries has assisted prompter learning and has noticeably enriched learners' vocabularies. The consumption of technology is required as it is led to preventing obstacles, and innovative realms have been studied within this informational era (Alsulami, 2016). Ultimately, via assistive technology with its diversity of applications either online or offline EFL learners are helped to access lessons and information from anywhere and at any time.

Some experts added that Assistive Technology strongly supports the success of teaching in language classes. The technology is like a computer, fast Internet connection, and a secure platform. Also advanced teacher skills and training on how the technology supports teaching in the Language class (Pirani, 2004; O'Neill, & O'Donoghue, 2004; Baylor & Ritchie, 2002 as cited in Al-Mahrooqi & Troud, 2014).

The study of the use of technology assistance in language learning is increasingly concerning. There were 33 studies recorded in 2014 (Darmi & Albion, 2014). Meanwhile the technology that helps students write in English also began to become educators attention and researchers as writing is an important skill possessed by students, especially in college. Thus, the teaching and learning with the help of technology for effective English writing are inevitably expected to be required. Technology besides being easy to use can also attract the attention of students because of the many interesting applications that are available in the mobile phone operating system.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is qualitative research. The research conducted at one of the private universities in the city of Tangerang, especially in the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University, Tangerang. The research participants were

researchers, namely by positioning themselves as participant observers, accompanied by non-participant observer, and 30 students as research subjects which were chosen purposively. The important aspect of case studies qualitative research require many sources of information, such as observation, interviews, documents, and audiovisual material (Cresswell, 2009, p. 175).

Thus, this study used a set of ways to collect data such as self-structured questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire in this study saw the problems that exist in the field. The interview was the stage for obtaining valid information (Jong and Jung, 2015, p. 35).

The researchers carried out questionnaire on one of the private campuses in Tangerang, namely English Language Study Program, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang. The selection of sample data purposively were 2 participant lecturer observers, noted as L#1, 1 non-participant observer, L#2, and 30 participants students, S#1 – S#30. This stage was carried out to reveal the lecturers and students' perspective of assistive technology in EFL writing.

Then the researchers carried out the interview. In this stage, the researchers found out the need for the implementation of Assistive Technology strategies in teaching English writing. They were tools, programs, or applications which needed relating to the technology assistance of EFL writing, which was starting from stimulus ideas idea to start writing, drafting paragraph: building sentences that contain the main thoughts, then developing them with several supporting sentences, finally arranging them so that they become interrelated and intact English essay.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results are portrayed concerning EFL writing strategy using Assistive Technology namely

a. **Students' and Lecturers' Perspective in EFL Writing Strategy Using Assistive Technology**

Towards the questionnaires of Students' and Lecturers' Perspective in EFL Writing Strategy Using Assistive Technology revealed the data as follows

Table 1. Students' perception of devices, and online tools usage frequency in learning EFL Writing

Tools	Always	Sometimes	Never
1.Computer software for learning English	4 (3.33%)	20(16.66%)	96 (80%)
2.Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Blogs	16(13.33%)	68 (56.66%)	36(30%)
3.YouTube, Skype, MP3 player, and podcasts	32 (26.66%)	36 (30%)	52 (43.33%)
4.Smartphone or tablet apps	100 (83.33%)	08 (06.66%)	12(10%)

(Source: Prepared by the authors, 2019)

The column above has shown that students' perception of devices, and online tools usage frequency in learning EFL Writing various numbers. The first perception is for using computer software for learning English. There are four students or 3.33% who used computer software. Four students were smallest number in this point, because they chose 'always'. However, there were also twenty students who used computer software and they include to the 16.66%. Finally, in this point were dominated students who chose 'never'. They were 96 students or 80%.

In the second one, the highest number was 56.66% or there were 68 students who chose 'sometimes' on using Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and blogs. In the same row, there were thirty-six students who chose 'never'. In the percentage was as 30%. In this phase, there was lowest number. They were sixteen students or 13.33% who chose 'always'.

The column YouTube, Skype, MP3 player, and podcasts was shown some numbers. These students had chosen 'always', 'sometimes', and 'never'. The highest number was on 'never', because there were 43.33% students or fifty-two students. In the middle numbers were on 'sometimes'. There were thirty-six students or

30%. The last but not least, the number is almost equal than before. There were 26.66% or thirty-two students who chose 'always'.

There was a possibility that using smartphone or tablet apps were closed to the users. There were one hundred students who chose 'always'. It was dominated because in the percentage was on 88.33%. In the column 'sometimes', there were twelve students or twelve students to choose. In the percentage also has showed the significant lower than 'always' choosing. It was 12%.

Table 2. Students' perception of devices, and online tools usage frequency in practicing EFL Writing

Tools	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Computer software for learning English	4 (3.33%)	20(16.66%)	96 (80%)
2. Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Blogs	16(13.33%)	68 (56.66%)	36(30%)
3. YouTube, Skype, MP3 player, and podcasts	32 (26.66%)	36 (30%)	52 (43.33%)
4. Smartphone or tablet apps	100 (83.33%)	08 (06.66%)	12(10%)

(Source: Prepared by the authors, 2019)

On the table, there were contained of students' perception of devices and online tools frequency in practicing EFL writing. The various tools and numbers were filled as achievement description. The first point of practicing EFL writing the students has chosen 'never' as their decision. They were ninety-six students or 80% students to choose computer software for learning English. Then, there were 16.66% who has chosen 'sometimes' of twenty students. The last, there were four students or 3.33% who chose 'always' as their decision.

The second point of the table above is that there were sixty-eight students whose chose 'sometimes' and this percentage was about 56.66%. There were thirty-six students or 30% who chose 'never'. Then, there were 13.33% who chose 'always'. In another says that there sixteen students.

In the next point of using YouTube, Skype, MP3 Player, and podcasts in practicing EFL writing, there were three kinds that popular for students to choose. There were students who chose 'never' as the dominant thing. They were fifty-two

students or 43.33%. On the 'sometimes' column, there were thirty-six students or 60% percentage. It was quite bigger than 'always' that were 26.66% or thirty-two students.

In the last point, there were one hundred students who chose the facility from YouTube, Skype, MP3 player, and podcasts. In the percentage is that it was 83.'22%. In the same side, there were 12 students who chose 'never'. On the percentage of number was 10%. In the last thing is that there were eight students or 06.66% who chose 'sometimes'.

Table 3. Lecturers' perception of devices, and online tools usage frequency in preparing teaching EFL Writing

Tools	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Computer software for preparing teaching English writing	3 (100%)	0%	0%	0%
2. Social Media and Blogs/Websites	3 (100%)	0%	0%	0%
3. YouTube, Skype, MP3 player, and podcasts	0%	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)
4.Smartphone or tablet apps	2 (66.6%)	0%	0%	1 (33.3%)

(Source: Prepared by the authors, 2019)

On the table are shown that the subjects research were commonly using computer software for preparing teaching English writing. And it is revealed that they also usually used blogs or websites to prepare their teaching. Furthermore it is discovered 1 participant sometimes used YouTube to prepare their teaching. Another said rarely used it. And the other said never used it. And 2 of them used smartphone or tablet apps in preparing their teaching; only 1 subject research said they never used them.

Table 4. Students' perception of devices, and online tools usage frequency in teaching EFL Writing

Tools	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Computer software for teaching English writing	3 (100%)	0%	0%	0%
2. Social Media/ Blogs/ Class on-line	0%	2 (66.6%)	0%	1 (33.3%)
3. YouTube, Skype, MP3 player, and podcasts	0%	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)
4. Smartphone or tablet apps	0%	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)

(Source: Prepared by the authors, 2019)

Thus, all of these finding in line with Agullo, Juan, & Valejjo (2015) they asserted that technological developments in learning have been continued to grow rapidly in the 90s initiated by CALL then now begins to become a very dynamic thing, teaching, learing could be done from anywhere, any time by MALL.

b. The Needs of EFL Writing Strategy Using Assistive Technology

Regarding the interview of Students and Lecturers on The Needs of EFL Writing Strategy Using Assistive Technology disclosed the data as follows. The interview data finding from 32 subjects research exposed that all of the participants are using technology assistance in learning and teaching EFL writing. Revealed on the interview data finding the applications EFL students used in applying assistive technology strategy in learning EFL writing: 29 students used *Google Translate* app, then 2 *Kamusku*, 1 *Sederet*, 30 *Dictionary*, 1 *LINE Dictionary* and 20 also *Blogs* or using *Websites*, 10 *e-Books or PDF* article, 2 *PowerPoint*, 5 (watching) *YouTube*, and 6 *Film*. 2 *Grammarly* app. 3 *Duolingo* app, 1 *Hello English* app, 3 *Twitters*, 10 *Instagram*. It means that most students are familiar with the tools/applications on

their mobile phones or note books/laptops, which are, assisted them in their EFL writing learning activities.

Discovered in interview data, it shows that the applications lecturers used on the assistive technology strategy in teaching EFL writing such as Webbing or using *Websites* as well as *Microsoft Office programs*: *Microsoft Document: Review* and *PowerPoint* to prepare their teaching. Furthermore *on-line Class* as virtual learning, was to assist them teaching EFL writing. It means that the tools/applications cited are really applied to support them to teach EFL writing.

The positive idea on applying assistive technology strategy in learning EFL writing; assistive technology tools eased EFL students efforts to write EFL essay as S#3 said that it could facilitate learning EFL writing for the flexibility: she felt that the assistive technology, which she used, was easy to carry everywhere because it was in her smartphone and she could access it whenever and wherever. It made her easier finding meaning of new English vocabulary and wrote its sentences. Therefore, it is praised as a valuable tool for autonomous learning. In line with Green (2005) in the previous research states technology provides EFL students with valuable language experiences. The main role ICT, especially computer/internet show in assisting EFL lecturers introduce innovation in the EFL writing and engaged students actively in the applicable skill of EFL writing that is it could support EFL students writing competency and make them enjoy the process writing activities.

Considering the interview data finding, it is found from the lecturer (coded as L#2), that it is an interesting development for education in teaching EFL writing as he said. It is similar to Al-Mahrooqi, R., & Troud, S. (2014) found that technology was possibly designed for EFL teaching and learning. The lecturers could use it to prepare for the EFL writing lesson material differently but also more wisely to achieve learning objectives easily.

Thus, teaching EFL writing using Assistive Technology strategy could support the situation that each of the lecturers and students are assisted with technology by those applications, which had been explained. It is in line with Engstrom, 2005; Vakili and Ebadi, 2019, they believed that Assistive Technology

has devices that support such as text-to speech software, word-processing programs, voice-recognition software, and organizing ideas software.

THE CHALLENGES FOUND BY STUDENTS AND LECTURERS

From 30 participants interviewed it is revealed that although there were 27 students believed that there were some challenges found during the use of Assistive Technology in their learning EFL writing, there were 3 students found that there was no obstacle in using it as S#6, S#8, and S#14, believed. There were 27 students faced a problem in Internet connection/Wi-Fi/no signal. 8 students admitted that they had to be focus or become autonomous learner. 4 students faced computers/note books hang. 6 students found low battery for their smartphones for social media networking or they just look at the update activities there. And consequently it triggers low battery. Next it also makes them not focus to the teaching learning in the classroom. This is in line with Pirani, 2004; O'Neill, & O'Donoghue, 2004; Baylor & Ritchie, 2002 as cited in Al-Mahrooqi & Troud, 2014 believed that Assistive Technology strongly supports the success of teaching in language classes. The technology is like a good condition for computer/device, fast Internet connection, and a secure platform, is mandatory.

Furthermore, there were 2 students did not accustom to use the Dictionary on-line apps as S#3 and S#27 asserted. And the last, a student admitted that his eyes was tired for looking at Laptop screen for studying using Youtube as S#7 said.

Considering the interview data finding, it is revealed the challenges lecturers faced as follows. Internet connection was the prominent obstacle when they use it. And L#2 admitted he was still lack of technology. Thus, he needs to be improved mastering it. It is similar with previous research conducted by Pirani, 2004; O'Neill, & O'Donoghue, 2004; Baylor & Ritchie, 2002 as cited in Al-Mahrooqi & Troud, 2014 that they believed Assistive Technology strongly supports the success of teaching in language classes is if a computer/device was in good condition, fast internet connection, and a secure platform. Also they believed that it is required advanced teacher skills and training on how the technology supports teaching in the Language class. What to add here is when L#1 knew his students chatting with their friends through social media or they just look at its

notifications, it was really annoying. As a result, tight controlling to the students when applying this strategy is really required.

CONCLUSION

Assistive Technology strategy in teaching EFL writing provides an modernization idea in the teaching of EFL writing. Assistive Technology can assist and motivate EFL students in all of EFL writing process into EFL writing product. It is recognized that Assistive Technology strategy in teaching EFL writing merits as one of thought in teaching EFL writing supported by *Idea Manager App*, *Webbing* to help determining ideas, planning and generating knowledge, stage. It could support activities idea determination phase. Then, *iTranslate Translator* & *Dictionary*, *Microsoft Word*: *Review*, *Grammarly* are found to assist translation stage while EFL students creating their writing in their translating plans into speech stage. Furthermore, *iTranslate Translator* & *Dictionary*, *Microsoft Word*: *Synonym*, *Grammarly* are discovered to aid proofreading or reviewing new idea or text built stage; Checking Parts of Speech, Spelling, and Improvisation Synonyms. What to add here are Microsoft Word, English Sentence Master App could assist for Sentence Building. English Paragraph, Composition, & Essay Writing App are for Paragraph Writing. English Paragraph, Composition, & Essay Writing App could assist EFL students' Writing Essay. Thus, Assistive Technology strategy alters an activity of EFL writing to more pleasurable and stimulating.

Assistive Technology reinforces the lecturers to prepare EFL writing teaching lessons materials by looking adequate information through Computer software, *Webbing*, and *YouTube* channel. Social Media such as *WhatsApp*, *Blogs*, and on-line Class assisted the lecturers in their EFL writing teaching activities.

Some challenges in the implementation of Assistive Technology strategy in teaching EFL writing; Lecturer should be mastered all matters relating to Assistive Technology strategy and its supported applications used in the teaching and learning EFL writing. It is revealed that the most challenge for lecturer and students is that if the Internet is slow or even non-existent service. And other is due to social media or the update notification activities from it, makes few students

not focus to the EFL writing teaching in the classroom. Lecturer must have enough time to enlighten the students well when they face problems.

From the conclusion above, to accomplish greatest results in EFL writing using Assistive Technology, there are some suggestions that can be given. EFL students must be given enough chance to be socialized properly to understand about Assistive Technology strategy in EFL writing; what tools or devices or applications could be used, and how to use them, so it could assist each EFL writing process stages in teaching learning EFL writing. They also could use it not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

Finally, the institution/university should afford the purchase applications that supports the Assistive Technology strategy in their curricular education system especially EFL writing course program by providing a good Internet connection for the students, so they could easily implement their tasks suitably and aid them to improve their EFL writing.

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