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TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT BLENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN A PARAGRAPH WRITING COURSE

Research Article

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Abstract

Blended learning has been talked about a lot in contemporary higher education and seen as the perfect solution for improving the quality of learning. In spite of the widespread support of acceptance this approach has gained, it is admitted that there is no single standard formula for a successful blended learning program, and thus more cases of blended learning need to be reported. This paper reports a study of the implementation of blended learning in a paragraph writing course with the aims of taking a closer look at the blended learning activities carried out in the course and revealing the responses of the students about the activities. This case study involved one lecturer and six student participants from the paragraph writing class, which were selected purposively. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings showed that there were five main learning activities in face-to-face instructions and five activities online. These activities were intended to maximize the use of classroom time for active and collaborative learning activities, supplemented with online activities to reinforce learning undertaken in the classroom. In general, student responses to blended learning activities in the paragraph writing course were positive.

Keywords: blended learning, face-to-face, online, paragraph writing

1. Introduction

Advanced technologies have provided people with various kinds of conveniences. In this digital era, life seems to become smoother especially due to the invention of Internet technologies supported by sophisticated devices that make interaction and communication much easier. This has resulted in inevitable changes in various fields of life including in education as well as in teaching and learning. One of the breakthroughs the technologies have established is the emergence of online learning and it has been viewed to possess the potential for quality learning. Online learning alone, however, is considered not sufficient because learners are not all the same in their learning preferences and not all skills, especially practical skills, can be learned online (Epignosis LLC, 2014). Combining the online learning and traditional face-to-face learning is seen as more beneficial because it could combine the best of both learning methods. However, Garrison and Vaughan (2008) alerted that in spite of the concept of blended learning that may sound simple, the practical application is more complex. Moreover, there is no best standard formula for blended learning, so the instructors

need to plan the program thoroughly and learn from any successful blended learning practices that can be adopted or modified according to their instructional objectives and learner needs.

There are various reasons underlying the decision of an instructor in choosing blended learning as the instructional approach in his course. Some may opt to integrate online learning into their traditional instructions because they want to establish effective learning in large classrooms while others may aim at boosting student engagement in learning, and several try to maximize the use of classroom time by supplementing the face-to-face instruction with online learning activities. Although many proponents of blended learning assert that blended learning should not be an addition but “restructuring and replacing traditional class contact hours” (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p.5), EFL teachers are usually aware of how short the course and class time are; hence, instead of replacing the existing face-to-face meetings with online learning sessions, they add the online learning activities to enhance learning experience. It is also the reason motivating a writing lecturer at a university in Indonesia to implement this approach in her paragraph writing course.

Several studies have investigated the implementation of blended learning in writing courses. Sicat (2015) in his study found that the integration of a Learning Management System (LMS) into a business writing class effectively enhanced students’ proficiency in business writing. Zainnuri and Cahyaningrum (2017) conducted a case study to investigate the use of some features on the LMS *Schoology* to enhance students’ proficiency in argumentative writing. Their findings showed that the features on *Schoology*, particularly the discussion feature, facilitated the activity of peer review which encouraged students to think critically and enhanced students’ proficiency in argumentative writing. These previous studies focused more on the learning activities on the LMS in blended learning to enhance students’ proficiency in writing, while this present study investigated not only the learning activities on the LMS as an online platform but also the instructional activities in the face-to-face setting in a paragraph writing course. Detailed descriptions of the blended learning activities, both on *Schoology* and in the face-to-face setting, will provide the information of how the blended learning activities were carried out so that the benefits of each activity could be maintained while the drawbacks could be overcome. Therefore, the purposes of this study were to take a closer look at the blended learning activities carried out in the paragraph writing course and to reveal the students’ opinions about the activities.

2. Literature review

2.1. Blended learning

It has been acknowledged that there is no specific definition of blended learning because scholars and academics have different interpretations of this term. The term ‘blending’ has been used for long periods of time to indicate the instructional practices incorporating different kinds of resources and activities within various learning environments (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007). Bersin (2004) described it more specific as the “traditional instructor-led training supplemented with electronic formats” (p. xv). Macdonald (2008) related it to the emergence of online learning and suggested that blended learning is the introduction of online media into a course. Thorne (2003) asserted that blended learning is to combine “online learning with more traditional methods of learning and development”. Meanwhile, Garrison and Vaughan (2008) view blended learning as “a design approach whereby both face-to-face and online learning are made better by the presence of the other” (p. 5). From these suggested concepts, it can be concluded in short that blended learning is combining online learning and face-to-face learning, in which both learning modes complement to one another for better results. It is obvious that the principle of blended learning is combining the best elements of online learning and face-to-face learning.

2.2. Learning management system

Blended learning in a traditional face-to-face classroom can be accommodated by using e-learning software such as a Learning Management System (LMS) for the online learning platform. The LMS enables students to access materials online and to be connected to data and to each other as well as enabling instructors to diversify their teaching materials and media. *Schoology* is one of the best learning management systems listed by Fenton (2018). *Schoology* can serve as a learning management system and a social network device. As a learning management system, *Schoology* involves the activities of content development, assessment, and some others so that instructors can spend less time on administrative tasks and more on instructional activities (“An introduction to Schoology for higher education”, n.d.). As a social networking device, *Schoology* works like *Facebook* in which users are able to communicate, update statuses, send messages, and share information within the network.

2.3. Paragraph writing

Good academic writing is made up of paragraphs with one clear idea per paragraph (BBC, n.d.). From this notion, it is obvious that paragraphs play an important role in academic writing. Zemach and Rumisek (2005) define a paragraph as “a group of sentences about a single topic” (p. 11), and these sentences describe the author’s main idea about the topic. A paragraph can explain something, give an opinion, share information, or tell a story. Three basic elements of a paragraph include the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. In addition to the ability to develop these elements to be a paragraph, one should be able to make the paragraph unified and coherent as well as paying attention to the structure and the rules of the written language, which are certainly not easy. Students can find it challenging to find ideas to include in their writing (Zemach & Islam, 2007) and may find it difficult to make their writing unified and coherent, so Zemach and Islam (2007) assert that learning to write well takes a lot of practice and patience. Students need clear guidance, positive feedback, and interesting ideas to write about.

2.4. A process approach to writing

Zemach and Rumisak (2005) assert that writing is not only putting words together to make sentences but also going through the process of producing a piece of writing. This process of writing which is called the process approach to writing involves several steps that include pre-writing, drafting, reviewing and revising. A process-based approach to writing generally focuses more on linguistic skills including planning and drafting, and less on linguistic knowledge, such as text structure and grammar (Badger & White, 2000). In other words, it emphasizes fluency and content, encouraging process and self-expression over form and grammar. The strategies in the process approach to writing assume that “students will write towards their own form and that grammar will be learned later, that process is more important than product” (Burdick, 2011 as cited in Gugin, 2014, p. 29).

3. Methodology

This case study was conducted at a university in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, from May to July 2018. The participants were six undergraduate students and one lecturer of a paragraph writing class at the university. Six student participants were purposively selected as the respondents among 27 students in the class. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The interviews were carried out to the lecturer to find out the instructional activities conducted in the blended learning course and to the student participants to uncover their opinions about the activities. The observations were also conducted to reveal the instructional activities on face-to-face learning mode and in online learning mode, while the document analysis was intended to get the supporting data. Data

were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, consisting of the steps of data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

4. Findings and Discussion

The Paragraph Writing course was offered in semester four, consisting of fourteen meetings for instructional activities and two meetings for the middle and final tests. Each meeting was set face-to-face while the online learning was supplementary to the face-to-face meetings. The face-to-face meeting was carried out once a week and the online learning was provided for students to do anytime and anywhere with a deadline set for each online weekly assignment. One should get a class code to be able to join the course on *Schoology*.

All materials were uploaded on *Schoology*, and they were based on the topics in the syllabus, which included the elements of a paragraph, process of paragraph writing (pre-writing), process of paragraph writing (writing supporting sentences), unity, coherence, descriptive paragraph, process paragraph, classification paragraph, definition paragraph, comparison-contrast paragraph, cause-effect paragraph, and opinion paragraph. The materials were uploaded before the face-to-face meetings, to enable students to preview the materials before the face-to-face meetings.

From the observation in a classroom meeting, there were several main activities identified, revolving around one topic (Table 1). Some activities carried out online on *Schoology* were listed in Table 2.

Table 1. *Blended learning activities in the classroom*

Class meeting	Blended learning activity	Note
Topic: Comparison-contrast paragraph	(Lesson materials in pdf & ppt formats about the comparison-contrast paragraph were uploaded on <i>Schoology</i> before class)	
	- Lecturer displayed students' pieces of writing previously uploaded on <i>Schoology</i> about "definition paragraph" (last meeting's topic) and gave feedback to the students on their work.	Teacher-student conferencing
	- The lecturer explained comparison-contrast paragraph and two possible organizations: block and point-by-point.	Lecturing
	- In pairs, students were asked to read a paragraph (provided in the material already uploaded on <i>Schoology</i>) and draw an online of the paragraph.	Pair work
	- Several students were asked to write down the results on the whiteboard and the class discussed the results together.	Class discussion
	- The lecturer explained transition signals in comparison-contrast paragraph	Lecturing
	- Students were asked to practice combining sentences using appropriate transition signals and discussed the results together. (For the homework, students were asked to write a comparison-contrast paragraph outside classroom hours on <i>Schoology</i>).	Class discussion
	- At the end of the term, students were asked to print out all the assignments including quizzes done on <i>Schoology</i> , and make a portfolio.	Portfolio

Table 2. Learning activities on the online platform

Online Platform	Activity	Note
<i>Schoology</i>	- Materials (pdf, word, & ppt) about the topics of the course were uploaded before face-to-face instructions.	- Uploading materials
	- Quizzes were put online and students were asked to complete them outside of class hours.	- Online quizzes
	- Writing assignments were done outside class hours and submitted online.	- Online writing assignments
	- Students' writing assignments were displayed on "Updates" page of <i>Schoology</i> .	- Displaying assignments
	- Students and lecturer were allowed to give feedback on students' pieces of writing.	- Online feedback

From Table 1 and Table 2, the blended learning activities that the lecturer implemented in the paragraph writing course can be listed as follows, which include students' responses to the activities.

a. Online

1. Uploading materials

All course materials in pdf, word, and ppt formats were uploaded on *Schoology* before face-to-face instructions. It was intended to enable students to access the materials anytime and anywhere through their mobile devices, and it would give the opportunity to the students to preview the content. Bowyer (2017) states that if the materials are uploaded on the online platform for pre-reading, the classroom time can focus on deeper analysis or discussion of the topics. Twigg (2003) also asserts that such activity encourages greater student engagement with course content.

Most student participants appreciated this material uploading because they could access the material from their phones, but not all of them previewed the material before a class as stated by some students,

Sometimes I pre-read the materials but most of the time I prefer listening to the lecturer's explanation and discussion in the class. (S1)

I rarely pre-read the uploaded material because I like to have it discussed first in the class and I would relearn it at home later in the evening. (S2)

It indicated that some students did not pre-read the materials and were more familiar with lecture-based learning. That some students do not engage with the online activities, including pre-reading the uploaded materials, is a common complaint from instructors (Perez & Riveros, 2014 as cited in Bowyer, 2017). Garrison and Vaughan (2008) suggest that the pre-class reading activity should be followed by a self-assessment, quiz, survey, or discussion forums activity. Such activities should be made compulsory (Bowyer, 2017), so that students would be encouraged to read the materials to complete the tasks.

Figure 1. Materials uploaded on Schoology

Figure 1 is a screenshot of materials uploaded on *Schoology*. Students could access and download the materials through their handphone and other mobile devices using the Internet connection.

2. Online quizzes

Online quizzes were given three times in the early meetings, namely identifying the topic sentences of several paragraphs, paragraph unity, and transition signals for coherence. The quizzes were given after in-class instructions and they were scored automatically on *Schoology*. The quizzes were intended to assess and strengthen students' knowledge and understanding about the content already taught in the class. Nelen (2017) states that interactive quizzes will stimulate knowledge retention, helping to remember and use the obtained knowledge. Students showed positive responses to this activity, as one student said,

Through taking the quizzes I can get new information and I can assess my knowledge. In addition, because the online quizzes allow me to retake the quizzes a few times to attain the 100 score, it makes me remember the materials. (S1)

Students also appreciated the format of the quizzes, which is mostly in the multiple choice format. Another student stated,

I find the quizzes fairly helpful and because they are in the multiple choice format, it makes things easier. (S5)

Some blended learning programs also use online quizzes as the pre-learning activity to create triggering events for students before a class, to probe students' conceptual understanding, and to identify individual learning needs (Garrison & Vaughan,

2008; Twigg, 2003; Thorne, 2003). Such quizzes for pre-reading are intended to enhance student engagement with the content, but in this present study, the quizzes were given after the classroom instructions.

Paragraph Unity Submissions Dis:

My Submissions Test/Quiz Comments

Fitria Aulia Shalehah ▶ Submission 2 ▾

20/20 Question 1

(1) Teachers should take steps to prevent students from cheating on exams. (2) To begin with, teachers should stop reusing old tests. (3) Students will check with their friends to find out. (4) Teachers should also take some common sense precautions at test time. (5) They should make students separate themselves—by at least one seat—during an exam, and they should watch the class closely. (6) The best place for the teacher to sit is in the rear of the room, so that a student is never sure if the teacher is looking at him or her. (7) Last of all, teachers must make it clear to students that there will be stiff penalties for cheating. (8) One of the problems with our school systems is a lack of discipline. (9) Anyone caught cheating should immediately receive a zero for the exam. (10) A person even suspected of cheating should be forced to take an alternative exam in the teacher's office. (11) Because cheating is unfair to honest students, it should not be tolerated.

a. 6

b. 7

c. 8

d. 10

Figure 2. A quiz on *Schoology*

Figure 2 is a screenshot of a quiz given on *Schoology*. Students could retake the quiz a few times to attain the highest score. The format of the quiz was mostly multiple choice.

3. Online writing assignments

When the course topics came to types of paragraphs, the lecturer assigned students to write a different type of paragraph every week after each face-to-face session. The writing assignments were done outside classroom time and submitted online on *Schoology* with the set deadline. This is one of the benefits of online learning that is the flexibility of being able to complete assignments anywhere and anytime (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Macdonald (2008) confirms that “online tools have changed our approaches to writing” (p.160). With the word processing tools, writing can be done faster and it is easier to revise when there is a mistake. It was confirmed by the students saying,

It saves time and is more practical because I can do the assignment online without having to submit the hardcopy. More importantly, doing the writing assignment weekly helps me improve my writing skills. (S3)

It is more convenient to do writing assignments online because I can do it through my phone while lying on my bed and the assignments really help me because by writing at home I have enough time to develop my writing and to imagine with my own writing. (S5)

The students' statements imply that submitting the writing assignments online was convenient and doing it outside of class time gives them plenty of time to generate ideas. Further, they admitted that having to do the writing assignments weekly help them improve their writing skills. It is in line with what Zemach and Islam (2007) stated that "learning to write well takes a lot of practice and patience" (P. iv).

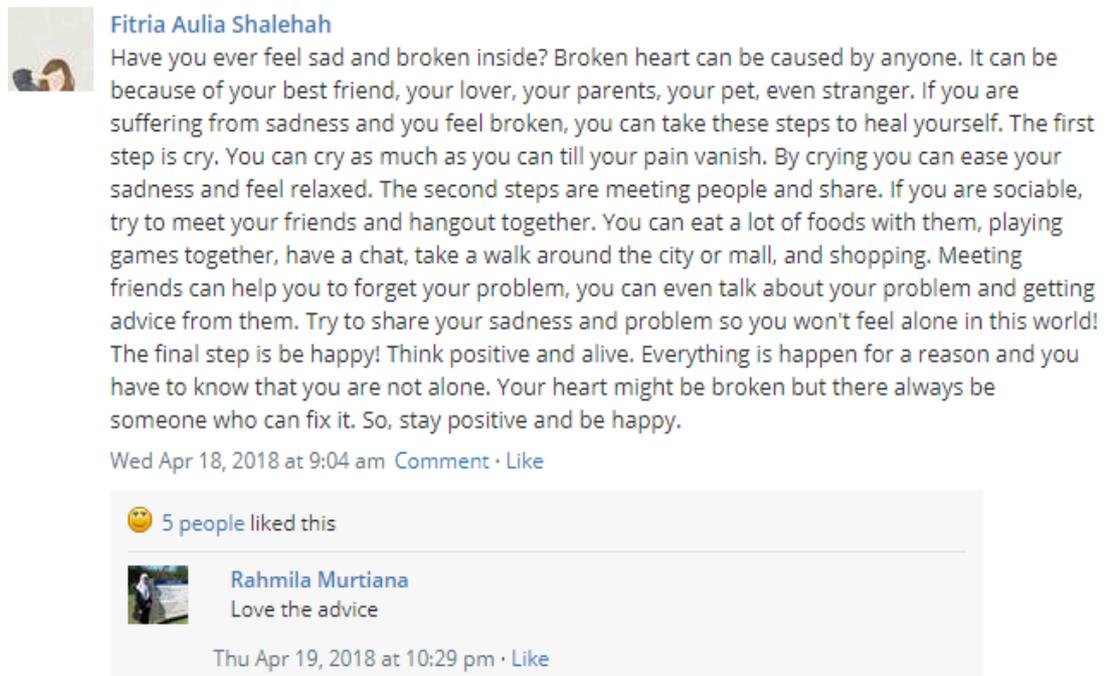


Figure 3. Online writing assignment

4. Displaying assignments online

The writing assignment actually could be submitted through "Submission" tool on *Schoology*, but the lecturer asked students to post their pieces of writing on "Updates" page where every student could see and read each other's piece of writing so that they could learn from each other and get motivated. Macdonald (2008) states that online tools offer new opportunities for drafting, sharing and presenting work. Students' responses to this activity were mixed; some said that they read their friends' work and it was helpful. One student said,

I can read my friends' pieces of writing, which helps me enrich my vocabulary because sometimes my friends use new vocabulary or rarely used words. I also learn new things including grammar. (S1)

However, some other students said that they never read her friend's work, as stated by one student,

I almost never read my friends' pieces of writing. (S4)

From these statements, it could be seen that several students seemingly analyzed their friends' work but some others only cared about submitting the assignments. The lecturer actually could have assigned students for peer feedback and made it

compulsory to encourage students to read their friends' work, or assigned students to give light and friendly comments on others' the way they did on social media. Figure 4 shows the interaction on *Schoology* indicating that students could learn as well as having fun by expressing themselves through writing and commenting.

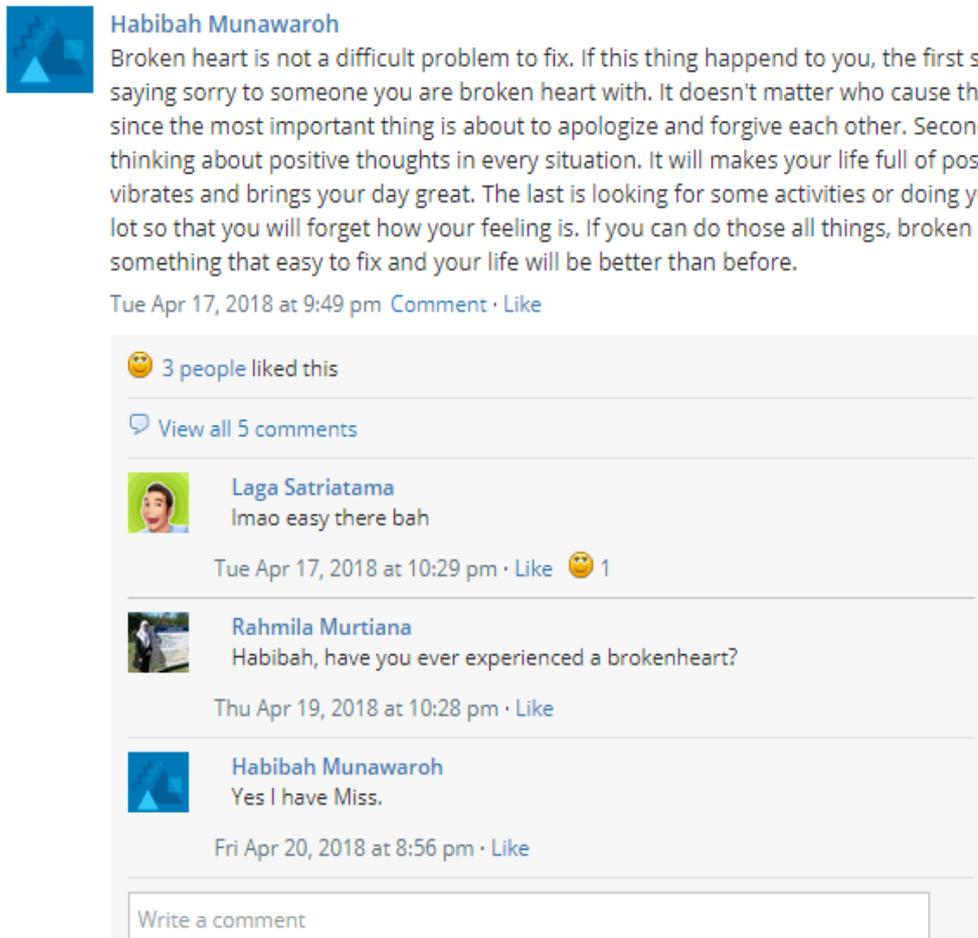


Figure 4. A screenshot of students' interactions on *Schoology*

5. Online feedback

The "Updates" page on *Schoology* has the interface like *Facebook* where the users can give comments on each other's posts. The lecturer suggested that students write comments on their friends' posts but not all of them seemed to obey the suggestion, yet some of them clicked the "like" button on their friends' posts. The lecturer passed comments on several students' pieces of writing as the feedback but the comments were not detailed because the main goal of displaying the students' work was to motivate students to write. Some students admitted that they were not actively getting involved in online feedback. One student said,

I only give feedback on my friends' pieces of writing by clicking "like" if I like the work. (S1)

Some others felt that their friends' feedback was trivial, seemingly hoping that they could get more meaningful feedback as conveyed by another student,

No elaborate comments given by my friends; only appraisal comments like “wow”. (S3)

Macdonald (2008) asserts that students can get feedback through peer review before hearing from the instructor. In this paragraph writing course, however, some students did not follow the lecturer’s suggestion to give feedback to their fellows’ work on *Schoology*. This is not surprising because several studies reveal that students dislike participating in online peer review (Jensen, 2016). Therefore, such an activity should be made compulsory to increase student participation and active involvement. The online feedback in this present study was mostly given by the lecturer as seen in Figure 5. The feedback could be used by students to revise their pieces of writing.

The screenshot displays a series of comments on the Schoology platform. At the top, a comment from Raka CB discusses drug abuse. Below it, Rahmila Murtiana provides feedback on a topic. Further down, another comment from Raka CB is shown. At the bottom, a comment from Monika Saraswati discusses Japanese manga. The interface includes user avatars, names, comment text, and interaction options like 'Show More', 'Comment', and 'Like'. A text input field for writing a comment is also visible.

Raka CB
Drug abuse is very dangerous for health. Drugs have addictive effect, and if you feel they are not dangerous enough, drugs abuse can cause a lot of serious health problems to your body. For instance, drugs can cause you nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Not only that, they can also weaken our immune system and increasing susceptibility to diseases, and far more serious, they can make your...
▼ Show More
Tue Mar 6, 2018 at 5:26 pm Comment · Like

Rahmila Murtiana
your topic is not based on the options discussed in class last week
Tue Mar 6, 2018 at 6:01 pm · Like

Raka CB
omg, my friends told me to make a paragraph, and i asked them "you can choose any topic that you want?" and they said yessss.
Wed Mar 7, 2018 at 8:39 am · Like

Write a comment

Monika Saraswati
Have you ever thought why Japanese manga (comics) is very popular around the world? There are some things that make it happen. such as stunning character depth, genius storytelling, intense battles, redefining norms, and extra ordinary scenes. In Japanese manga, we rarely see similar characters, whether the visualization or the personality, the mangaka (manga's makers) always trying to create...
▼ Show More
Tue Mar 6, 2018 at 4:19 pm Comment · Like

😊 1 person likes this

Rahmila Murtiana
too long

Figure 5. A screenshot of online feedback on *Schoology*

b. Face-to-face

1. Lecturing

In this paragraph writing course, the lecturer introduced a new topic, such as a new type of paragraph, by giving a short lecture about the concepts of the paragraph and proceeded to show a paragraph model for students to analyze to find the elements of the paragraph. Although Garrison and Vaughan (2008) claim that lecturing is not effective in engaging students in understanding a lot of information, Charlton (2006) suggests that lectures may be the best teaching method for delivering conceptual knowledge when a significant knowledge gap between the instructor and students needs to be solved. The responses from students were positive. Some students said,

My lecturer gives a brief lecture but mostly she shows the examples of a paragraph and how to write a paragraph. (S4)

The lectures delivered by my lecturer help me understand the material more deeply although all the materials are already uploaded on Schoology. (S5)

Indeed the time for lectures need be reduced because “interactive and collaborative learning experiences are more congruent with achieving higher-order learning outcomes” (Palloff & Pratt, 2005 as cited in Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). In blended learning settings lectures should be reduced and replaced with more interactive and collaborative learning experiences (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

2. Pair work and group work

Students were usually asked to work in pairs or groups to recognize a new type of a paragraph and to draw an outline from a model paragraph. The results were then discussed together. Still, in groups they were also asked to do the steps of the writing process (pre-writing) to produce their own paragraph. The outline resulted from the group work could be used as the outline for their individual writing assignments later on *Schoology*. Sansivero (2016) asserts that collaborative learning in small groups produces stronger solutions and encourages sharing for enhanced learning. Macdonald (2008) adds that group work increases the quality and quantity of interaction among students and with the instructors. Students showed mixed responses to this activity. Some said it is helpful but some others said it depended on the ones they worked with.

Doing the exercises together with friends is very helpful. My friends sometimes suggest ideas I never think about. (S1)

We can share ideas and it is nice to hear different thoughts from my friends' point views. (S5)

It depends on who you are working with. When my group mates are easy to work with and willing to contribute to the work, it would be beneficial. (S2)

Most of the exercises in the paragraph writing class were done in groups or in pairs for collaborative learning. Some activities performed in the work groups in this paragraph writing class included game-like activities, such as the paper-glue activity and chain writing. Although such game-like activities may look simple, they can be used to develop collaborative learning as well as generating fun among adult students. The teaching practices in blended learning are intended to establish the climate for collaborative learning (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008).

3. Class discussion

In introducing a new type of paragraph the lecturer showed a model paragraph to students and the students were asked to recognize and identify the paragraph for the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. The results were then discussed together, and it helped students deepen their understanding. It is in line with what Twigg (2003) emphasizes that discussion sessions reinforce what students have learned and clear up the misconception. Moreover, the class discussions provide “opportunities for teachers to direct student exploration of a topic, and for students to test ideas, ask questions, and debate points” (Stein & Graham, 2014, p. 150). Some students stated the benefits of class discussion.

The discussions are usually carried out after group work and exercises. Through the discussions, we ask questions and deepen our understanding. (S1)

I can ask questions through discussions and find out the mistakes our group has made regarding the elements of a new paragraph. (S3)

Not all of my friends ask questions but the discussions over the results of our work clarify any misconceptions. (S6)

The class discussions in the paragraph writing course were usually carried out after class exercises or group work exploring the elements of a model paragraph. Such a learning method indicates an inductive learning approach which starts with examples and asks learners to find rules (BBC Teaching English, 2006). Prince and Felder (2007) explain that through an inductive approach the instructors present challenges for students to solve, enabling students to learn on their own. This approach leads to learner-centered learning, which is the core of blended learning.

4. Teacher-student conferencing

Teacher-student conferencing is a way of providing feedback by the lecturer to students on their writing assignments. The writing assignments previously posted on *Schoology* would be displayed in front of the class through a projector. The lecturer picked a few good paragraphs among students’ work as the samples of good pieces of writing, and for the paragraphs, with major mistakes, the lecturer usually asked the students to revise them. The lecturer provided feedback in general, not giving grades on the work. Garrison and Vaughan (2014) state that assigning grades can be demotivating, so it is better to give actionable feedback that students can apply to the next writing exercise. All student participants showed positive responses to this activity. Some students said,

Although my lecturer does not give feedback to all of our paragraphs, I can identify my mistakes by paying attention to the feedback given by my lecturer on several paragraphs of my friends’. (S3)

The feedback from my lecturer helps me see my own mistakes in writing so that I can make it better. (S5)

Hyland (2003) states that through face-to-face conferencing, the teachers have the opportunity to respond to their students’ diverse writing issues, save time because they do not have to mark students’ papers in detail, and assist students to see their strengths and weaknesses, develop autonomy skills, allow them to question the feedback, and help them develop revision skills.

5. Portfolio

All the tasks completed on *Schoology*, including quizzes and writing assignments, were asked to be recorded in a writing chart, and all pieces of writing that students posted on *Schoology* should be printed out as the portfolio at the end of the term. The portfolio in the paragraph writing course was intended to see and to assess the progress of students' paragraph writing skills. Students were also able to see their own progress. Hyland (2003) states that the aim of portfolios is "to obtain a more prolonged and accurate picture of students writing in more natural and less stressful contexts" (p. 234). Macdonald (2008) explains that "most portfolios are used to communicate and present a range of student work over a period of time" (p.140). Most student participants responded positively to this activity, stating that this made them more organized and able to see their progress in writing.

From the start, my lecturer has asked us to record our work in a writing chart, including the themes of work, dates, and notes. It teaches us to be more organized. (S1)

After I printed out the assignments and put them together, I can see my own writing from the very beginning. I think I have made some progress. (S4)

Nordquist (2018) describes a writing portfolio as a collection of student writing intended to present a student's writing development over the course, and it can be used as the student assessment. The student portfolios in this paragraph writing course were used as part of the summative assessment in addition to the results of the middle test and final test.

5. Conclusion

The blended learning activities in the paragraph writing course emphasized the active and collaborative learning experiences. The classroom time was mostly used for class discussion, group work, and teacher-student conferencing while still retaining brief lecturing as one of the teaching methods to introduce a new topic. The online learning focused on engaging students with the materials and reinforcing what was already learned in the classroom, such as uploading materials, providing quizzes, assigning writing assignments, displaying the assignments, and allowing online feedback. Some activities actually had the potential to be enhanced; for example, the online quizzes that can be given not only after the class meetings but also before the face-to-face instructions to increase student engagement with the content.

A few activities seemed not optimally performed; for instance, the space for online feedback was not optimized for peer review activity. It is, however, needs to be in accordance with the learning objectives and student needs in the course. In this paragraph writing course, the lecturer emphasized on helping students develop strategies for generating ideas through brainstorming and outlining, and then writing their paragraphs. The focus was on the writing process, so the lecturer did not give much corrective feedback on forms and did not assign students to complete a peer review. Moreover, the writing activities were intended to motivate students to write, so the feedback during the teacher-student conferencing was maintained constructive. The students' responses to the blended learning activities in the paragraph writing course were generally positive and the students showed their preferences for the combination of online and face-to-face learning rather than online or face-to-face learning alone.

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