

Using blog to Promote English Skills for EFL Students: The Students' Perception

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Abstract: Blogs in many modern institutions have been used to promote English skills in ELT situation. This quantitative study aimed to identify and describes the use of blog to promote English skills for EFL students in PBIG FKIP Unilak. This study based its data from 118 students who attended 4 different classes based-blog. Employing a total sampling technique, the students were invited to fill up online questionnaire. The quantitative data shows the majority (98%) of the students had a positive perception that blog was very useful and (97%) effective as a media to promote English language skills. This positive result means that blog can be used as a media of learning to promote English skills among EFL students based on the perception of students who have used blog in 4 different classes-based blog in PBIG FKIP Unilak.

Keywords: Perception, blog , ELT

1. Introduction

Weblog also known as Blog is a web application for blogging or publishing someone's work onto virtual world. Blog In recent years has been widely used as an effective tools to reach the global result of teaching in education field. There are many studies in ELT context (Aydan: 204; Aydin: 2014; Gutler: 2011; Noytim: 2010), which have proven the effectiveness of blog to improve skills, motivation and critical thinking in many institutions.

The blog usage is beneficial in many ways not only blog can increase students knowledge but also increasing students ability to think critically. In the past few years the trend of blog usage as media of learning, increasing significantly in many modern institutions, this trend happen because blog was used not only as media to improve students skills in English but as well as a strategies to rise students motivation in ELT classrooms. Realizing the benefits, English Department of FKIP Unilak (henceforth: PBIG) starts using blog in teaching English for EFL students since two years ago. Many previous study as mentioned earlier proved that blogs as a personal site can be very useful in helping English teachers to gain the goals and teaching objectives therefore, this study shares a thought in broadening ELT context through blogging activity, based on students experiences in their blogs based-classes in English Department of FKIP Unilak (henceforth: PBIG) in Pekanbaru Riau Indonesia.

Blog usage has changed education point of view to be more comprehensive and varied in contributing to ease English learning process including in ELT context. The development of education which used a little touch from IT has contributing the development and renew conventional learning media. It becomes more varied, creative, and innovative as this is what PBIG expected so far. Blog helps lecturers and students able to post materials or information to support learning process [5].

Therefore, accessing the information will be easy so the students can learn anywhere, anytime, and lecturer can upload their material with no limitation of time and place. Furthermore, blog is also increasing students' motivation and ability to think critically. For that reason, there is nothing wrong for the teacher to use blog as learning media because blog can be used as creativity tools. It also develops students' motivation and trained the students more independent in learning. There are so many beneficial things in using blog as learning process. Aydin, (2014) suggests that blogs are beneficial because they promote collaboration, higher order thinking, problem solving skills, and the communication skills of students.

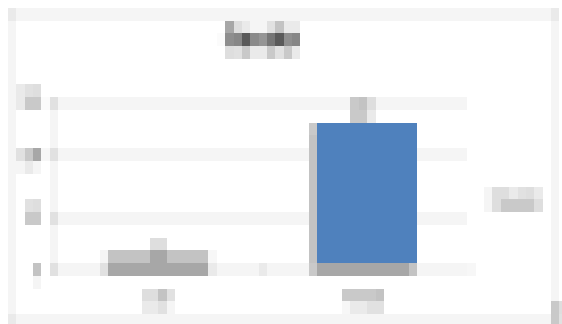
In the past two years the number of blog writers (blogger) in PBIG Unilak increasing significantly. A total of 168 students were found has a blog. Based on pre-observation in this study, the blog usage by some lectures was also the caused the trends of blogger increasing. It happens because blog was used as learning media as well as a strategy for some courses i.e.

Reading, Intro to Linguistic, Semantic, and Prose [5]. Moreover, blogging club also founded and becomes one of the favorite clubs in co-curricular activities in PBIG Unilak (Hamuddin: 2016). So far, blog in the class used to post an assignment such as article review, presentation slide, and discussion forum. Learning process in some of the courses in PBIG Unilak is somehow showing that blog is not only for writing and reading exercise in ELT context but also becoming tools for students to up-to-date with the recent study regarding to their assignment and stay connected with peers and their lecturer [5].

2. The Data

A quantitative approach is used in this study to describe the situation based on the students perceptions regarding the use of blog in PBIG. This study was conducted on April-Mei 2016 focusing on the 118 students that enroll for the 4 blog-based classes at PBIG FKIP Unilak. The data collection in this study was based on the questionnaire to maintain the quantitative perspective. The online questionnaire designed to describe majority of students' perception on the blog usage as well as to see the major description for this topic regarding blog as learning media or strategy in some subjects in PBIG FKIP Unilak.

The questionnaire in this study start to distributed since April 2016 at the PBIG Unilak and analyzed on June 2016. The main data of this study comes from online. The questions in the questionnaire were designed to covers; demography, and the use of blog as strategy and learning tools at the English Department Faculty of PBIG FKIP Unilak. It consists of with multiple choice options to ease the students in answering the questionnaire. The students' demoraphy described in the diagram below:



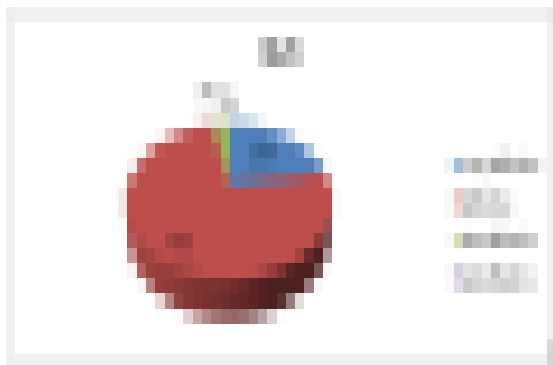
From 118 respondents who completed online questionnaire it was found the 89.8 % was female with 106 students, and the remaining 10.2 % was 12 male students. The data showing that the majority who took part in thjs study somehow was female. Moreover, these students enroll in blog based classes i.e. Reading, Structure, Introduction to Linguistic, Semantic, and Prose. This is somehow reflecting the quantity which indicates female students was more dominant in term of quantity at PBIG Unilak.



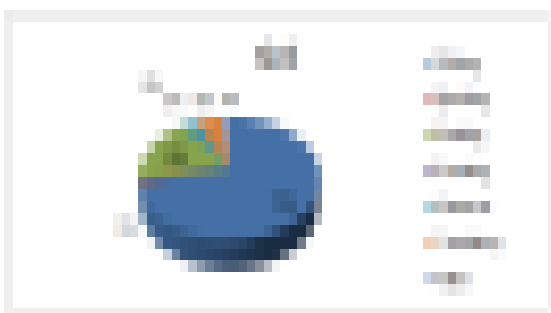
On the question number 1 “*saya sudah memiliki blog selama....*” Data on the diagram above showed that majority students (84%) use blogger at English Department Faculty of Education and Teacher’s Training Unilak start blogging for *1 month – 6 month*, meanwhile 6 % have blog for *6 month – 1 year*. and as much as 5 % from students user blog has been blogging for *less than 1 month*. This is means that the students were new to use blog in learning English.

In the question number 2 “*menurut saya, penggunaan blog sebagai media pembelajaran di jurusan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Unilak*” Showing that 58 % students said it is “very useful”. Followed 40 % the students said *helpfull*. This study only found (1 %) of the students who was *not helpful* answer or *less helpful*. These data means that majority students at PBIG experiencing that the use of blog was very useful when learning English.

The data somehow calculating 98% of the students enroll in the blog-based classes have a positif experiences regarding blogging activities or blog based resources in PBIG Unilak.



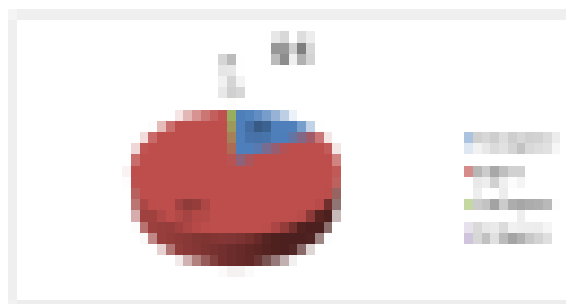
On the question number. 3 “*menurut saya media blog sangat... sebagai media pembelajaran di jurusan bahasa inggris*”. Data on the diagram above showed that 75% PBIG students declared that blog was *effective* as learning media then followed 22 % with *very effective*. However, as much as 3 % students said *less effective*. This data means that majority (97%) of students at PBIG giving a positive respond about the effectiveness blog as media of learning. Therefore, this showing that blog was effective in learning process at PBIG Unilak.



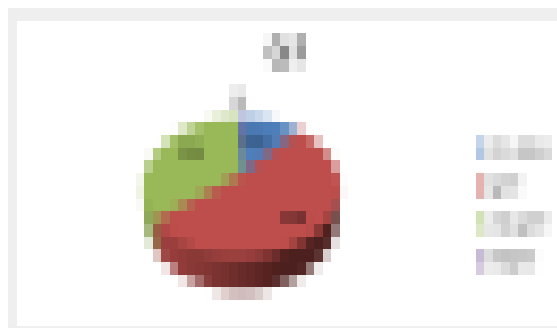
On the question number. 4 “*menurut saya, menggunakan blog sebagai media pembelajaran lebih tepat digunakan dalam membantu meningkatkan kemampuan /pengetahuan*” Data on the diagram above showed most of the students (71 %) were prefer *writing* as one of the skill which can increased significant used blog as media. While 18 % the students chose improving the *reading* skill then 6 % from the students chose *vocabulary* skill followed with 3 % chosing *grammar* and 1 % pick up *speaking* skill and 1 % chosing the another skills. This data showed that based on their experience, writing and reading skill were the 2 most improved skills regarding the use of blog.



On the question number 5 “*Dengan memiliki blog, saya..... dalam mengerjakan tugas yang diberikan dosen*”. the diagram above showed most of the students (70 %) feeling *motivated* in doing the task, while 26 % of the students mentioned *more motivated* and only 4 % of the students were *less motivated* in doing the task. This data indicated that the majority of the students at PBIG feel the motivation was rising regarding the use of blog.

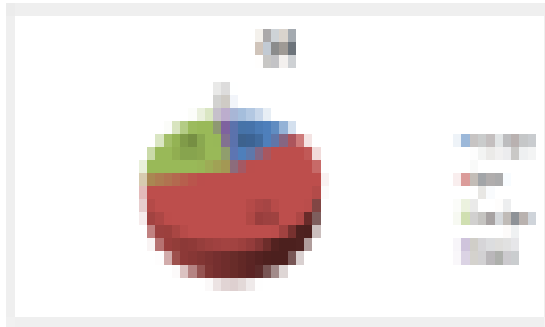


On the question number 6 “*Saya percaya penggunaan blog sebagai media pembelajaran akan skill saya dalam Bahasa Inggris*” The data on the diagram above showed that the majority students at (81 %) PBIG choose *improve* after studying using blog and only 2 % of students were *less improving* with the use of blog.



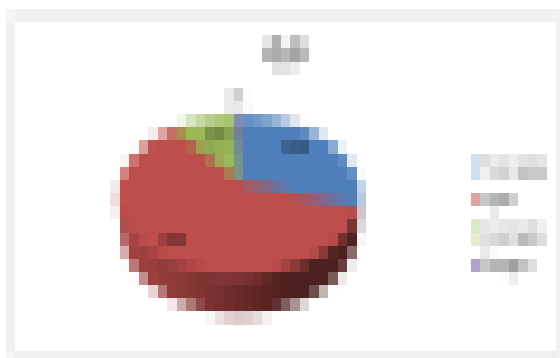
On the question Number. 7, “*Saya lebih suka belajar menggunakan blog dibandingkan belajar dengan menggunakan media lainnya*” This study showed as much as 53% of students agreed that they would rather learn to use blog

than learning using other media, and 34% of students answered *less agree* to use blog than to learn using other media. However, 12% of students answered *strongly disagree* in learning using blog, and 1% of the students mentioned *disagree*. From the data above showing the majority of students (67%) prefer to use a blog than to learn by using other media. This may be due to media blog that was easy to apply in learning.



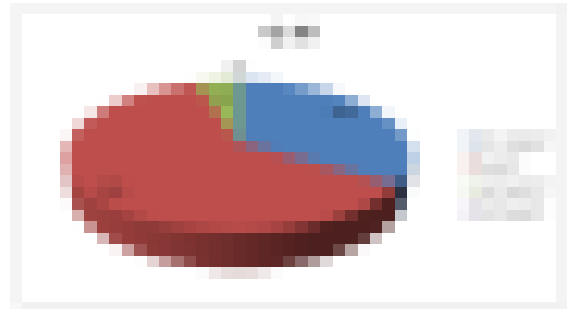
On question number 8, “*Saya berfikir penggunaan media blog bisa diterapkan di hampir semua mata kuliah di jurusan Bahasa Inggris*” This study showed 57% of students *agree* and 24% of students answered *less agree* that the use of the media blog can be applied in almost all subjects in PBIG Unilak..

However, there were 15% of students answered *strongly disagree* and 4% of students’ answered *did not agree* with the use of blogs as a media can be applied in almost all courses in the department of English. From the data above can described the majority of students (72%) felt the use of blog can be applied in many subjects.

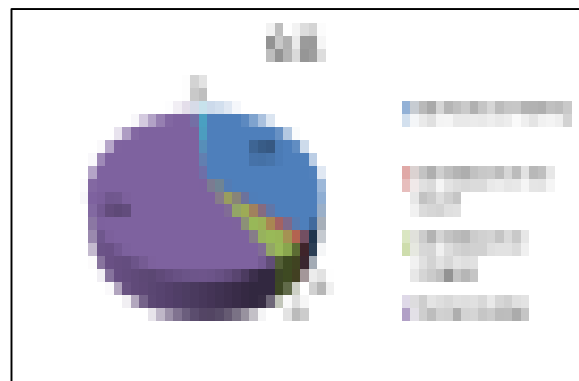


On the question number. 9, “*Saya berharap penggunaan strategi pengajaran menggunakan media blog bisa terus di terapkan di jurusan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Unilak*” In the diagram above showed that 59% of students *agree* and 30% said *very agree* that blog can be used again

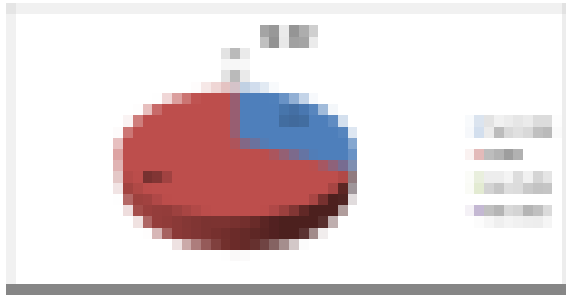
in the next semester. However, this study also found in total 40% of students answered *less agree* and *disagree* that blogs can be continued to be applied in PBIG Unilak. The data above reveals that the majority students PBIG Unilak expected blog could be continued to be applied as it somehow effective and efficient to be applied.



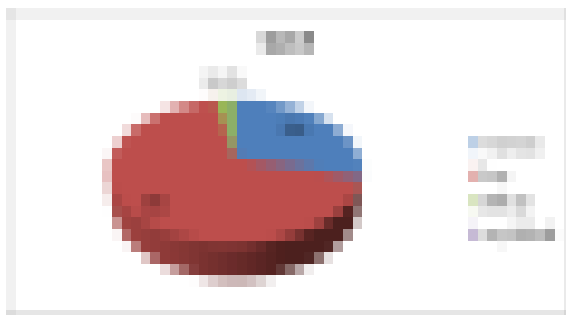
On the question number 10, *in my opinion apps and features on blogto learn English*. Data on the diagram above showed the majority of students (61 %) mentioned that apps and features on blog *support* to learn English and 34 % students mentioned *very support* in learning English, meanwhile only 5 % students felt *less support*. This data showed that the students at PBIG Unilak experiencing that apps and features on blog can help as well as facilitating the learning of English in PBIG unilak.



On the question number 11, “*Menurut saya, penggunaan blog sangat memudahkan saya dalam*” On the data diagram above showed that most of students (57 %) were felt the blog can be used as source of learning and 43% can share knowledge and getting feedback instantly. This data somehow showing that blog is a powerfull tools to help students in ELT context.



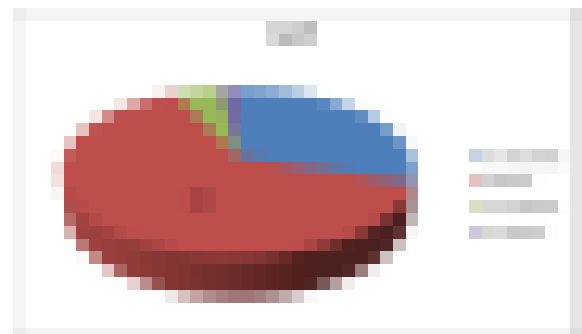
On the question number 12, “*Dengan saya memposting di blog, tulisan saya akan untuk orang lain*” On the diagram above showed that as much as 68 % students responded *usefull* and (32% *very usefull* to many people. The interesting findings here is there is none of the students answered *less usefull* and *not usefull*. This is means that students writing/post on the blog are considered usefull. It may be caused many students article which able to read by many people contaided something usefull for them.



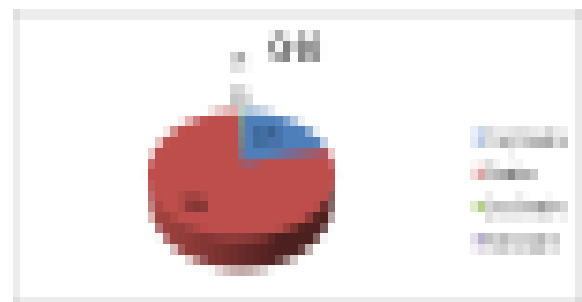
On the question number 13, “*Menurut saya, dengan menggunakan blog membuat tugas kelas jadi lebih untuk diperiksa oleh dosen*” This research showed as much as 97 % experiencing a positif situation and only 3 % of the students said *difficult*. This is means that the majority of students had not facing a difficult situation with their tasks and assignemnt class assignment regarding blog posts.



On the question number 17, “*saya merasa, penggunaan blog sebagai media pembelajaran di jurusan Bahasa Inggris membuat saya berbagi informasi dengan kawan-kawan*”. This research found as much as 63 % students of PBIG Unilak answered *easy* to give information with friends through blog, following with 35 % students answered *very easy* to give information with friends through blog. Only 1 % students answer were *not easy* and 1 % again students answer the others. From the data above can describe the majority of students (98 %) had not facing difficulting in sharing information with their friends through blog. It may be because the nature of blogt was information easy sharing-designed to anyone in cyberspace.



On the question number 15, “*saya merasa, penggunaan blog sebagai media pembelajaran di jurusan FKIP Bahasa Inggris, biaya yang dibutuhkan*”.The diagram above showing 63 % blogger mentioned still *reachable* then Followed 30 % *very reachable*. This data showed that the majority of students at English department felt that the use of blog is not something that costs them so much.



On the question number 19, “*Saya merasa bahwa dengan memiliki blog menjadikan saya lebih*” This research found as much as 78 % students at PBIG were answered become *creative* and getting more crative (21%) regarding the use of blog. This is some how reveals that the use of blog in PBIG rising the students’ creativity.

5. Conclusion

This descriptive quantitative study based its data from 138 students who enroll 4 different blog-based classes. This study tries to help academia in ELT context by sharing PBIG students' experiences on what they have been through in the last few months regarding the use of blog in their class.

PBIG starts using blog in the past two years to broadening ELT perspectives this present study conducted as to review the use of blog whether as a media of learning or a strategy to rise students English skills or rising their motivation in their ELT classes. Pre-observation and online questionnaire were used to find out students perspective on the use of blog. This study starts to collecting data soon after the semester end, May until June 2016. The study can reveals some points based on the data collected.

The blog is a suitable strategies and effective media to help EFL students in PBIG Unilak. Many of the students perceived the benefit by using blog in learning, and made their learning time more effective and efficient. Through blog students experiencing a positive atmosphere and help them to train their good communication skill whether among peers as well as with their lecturer. The study recommended that blog as an effective tools and should be able to broadening ELT goals and objectives in a higher education.

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