Article

Philosophical Approach of Reading Comprehension Test of Wattpad Readers and Writers Community

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Abstract: Wattpad has become a popular application. It is not only a medium to read stories, but also it can be used as a medium to learn writing. For some people, including students, writing takes work. Thus, it declines students' interest in writing. They might get some difficulties when they start to write and should get some kind of help, and using Wattpad can be a solution to their problem in writing learning. Besides easy to use, Wattpad is also provided several features that might help students to learn to write. On Wattpad, students can share their stories directly and get feedback from other users who will help them to tell their stories to lack thus, and they can revise them. Sharing their experiences and reading the other's story might help the student to improve their skills, not only in writing but also in their way of thinking. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to discuss how to use Wattpad to improve students' writing skills and critical thinking skills.

Keywords: wattpad, application, feedback

1. Introduction

In this digital era, social media has being a part of a lifestyle. This is a social phenomenon where the existence of social media has influenced how we live, how we work, and now more than ever, how we learn. Almost everyone has a social media account and uses it in their daily lives. Whether they only send a message, share photos, or even share their daily activities. Today, the function of social media is even more diverse. As Jones (2015: 93) states that social media technologies are no longer only used for leisure. For some reason, since social media has familiar among students, it has become a widely researched subject, especially in the field of education, to find out if there is any effect of using social media on students' learning process. Some students might have a problem with their subject, and they need some kind of help which they can get anytime and anywhere they need. In this case, social media can be an alternative to solve their problem because, through social media, the students can interact with the teacher even when they are in a different place.

Many types of social media have been created with certain functions and objectives. One of them is Wattpad. Wattpad is an eBook that provides a thousand works that can be read by people who love reading. However, it also provides features that allow users to write and publish their work themselves. By using Wattpad, the user can write as their wish. More interestingly, Wattpad users can share comments and information, where fellow users can give their criticism and suggestions for the works they read.

If seen that most Wattpad users are school-age teens, it does not seem impossible for the teacher to take advantage of this phenomenon that is utilized Wattpad as a medium to improve students' learning process. Some of the students might need the motivation to

start to write, and Wattpad, which provides a thousand books might give them what they need. Besides, on Wattpad they can interact with fellow users where they can share their experience in writing. Students may get the motivation to write after they use Wattpad. However, several things should be considered when using Wattpad as a medium to help the student in the learning process, i.e., the amount of content that might not be appropriate for students. Therefore, the role of teachers, parents, and the students themselves to avoid inappropriate content is required. Critical thinking enables people to perceive and reflect on information and facts critically when they face challenges (Huitt: 1998). It means that the students are expected to be able to think critically in order they are not trapped in inappropriate content and the goal of learning will be achieved. Since Wattpad is a phenomenon in society, especially among young people in the age school, therefore this article will discuss the extent of the effectiveness of using Wattpad to improve students' writing skills.

2. Materials and Methods

This article adopted qualitative research methodology for the literature review regarding the theme for Wattpad and critical thiking.

3. Results

Writing skills

Nunan(2003: 88) states that writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader. In other words, we can say that writing is the process of conveying our ideas, opinions, even feelings in written language, without us having to convey it verbally.

Writing we use today as one of the four basic language skills is a product of an invention called written language. However, not all students can write nicely. Many of them still have to learn to write even though it is only a simple text. Students at all levels of education and in all disciplines struggle with their writing skills (Alter & Adkins, 2001; Hooper & Butler, 2008; Vourlekis & Hall, 2007), and even, some of the graduates from college have limited ability to express themselves in writing (Brocato, Furr, Henderson & Horton, 2005). This is clear that writing skills are not easy, because not only students but also some graduates are still unable to express what is in their minds, ideas, opinions, and feelings in writing, especially if they are not accustomed to doing it.

The ability of a student to write might be influenced by several factors. Among them are the writing habit, the experience, the lack of facilities, and the lack of knowledge about writing techniques. People who had not gotten used to writing maybe will get difficulties when they are asked to write. They will be unconfident to start to write. Therefore, they may need some kind of motivation to make them more confident in order they can develop their writing skills, and using social media as a medium could be considered.

Critical thinking skills

Critical thinking has defined differently from various perspectives. However, basically that it means thinking logically about what to do and what to believe. As one of the most commonly accepted and widely quoted definitions states, critical thinking refers to the ability of individuals to take charge of their thinking and develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their thinking (Elder & Paul, 1994). Paul (1990: 9), for instance, considers critical thinking as disciplined, self-directed thinking which exemplifies the perfections of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thought, while Sternberg (1987: 3) regards critical thinking as the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions and learn new concepts.

Critical thinking skills are the cornerstone of self-development and improvement. It could be conceptualized as either cognitive skills or social and emotional disposition. Critical thinking as cognitive skills includes a set of higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, inference, evaluation, deductive and inductive reasoning, which is assumed to be taught and transferred. It means that critical thinking is not a talent, but it can be taught, and reading maybe can stimulate to improve their critical thinking.

According to Paul and Elder (1999), critical thinking is composed of three dimensions: the first is the elements of thought (reasoning); the second is the intellectual standards, the third is the intellectual traits. Paul and Elder suggest that people need to master two essential dimensions of thinking (elements of thinking and intellectual standards) to learn how to upgrade their thinking. Specifically, people need to be able to identify the 'parts' (elements) of their thinking, and they need to be able to assess their use of these parts of thinking using intellectual standards. Gradually, intellectual traits could be developed.

Social media and social media-based learning

Social media is a form of electronic communication in which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal message, etc, at the same time, whenever and anywhere in around the world. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explained that social media is a group of internet-based applications that are built on the foundation of ideology and web 2.0 technology and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Every individual who is above 13 years old will have an account on any of the popular social media networks. In other words, it can say that almost all students in the world might have social media. Social media allows students more freedom to connect and collaborate beyond the physical classroom, which means students anywhere can start to experience the globally connected world.

Social media-based learning is a method that uses social media as a medium in the teaching-learning process. In this case, social media might have afforded multiple opportunities to improve learning methods. Social media promotes self-directed learning. If reinforced in a classroom setting, these social media skills can be guided and refined to produce better learning outcomes and critical awareness. Social media also allows students more freedom to connect and collaborate beyond the physical classroom, which means students anywhere can start to experience being globally connected. Ferdig (2007) suggests social networking promotes interaction between learners and potentially improves active learning as in the student-centered constructivist environment. Meanwhile, Conole and Alevizou (2010) make a statement that Twitter and blogs, and other Web 2.0 technologies are catalysts of scholarly practice and the sharing of designs and good practices. This is made possible by allowing students to participate in a distributed network of educators and researchers to co-create knowledge and develop a skill of critique of content (Conole & Alevizou, 2010).

Wattpad

One of the various social media is Wattpad. Wattpad is an application developed for online reading and writing (Reid, 2016). It was founded by Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen in 2006 in Toronto, Canada. Different from Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, Wattpad is an eBook that provides thousands of books. It can also be referred to as social media for writers. Wattpad is an Internet community for readers and writers to publish new user-generated stories in different genres, including classics, general fiction, historical fiction, non-fiction, poetry, fan-fiction, spiritual, humor, and teen fiction (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wattpad).

Wattpad claims to have an audience of more than 80 million users. It was available in over 50 languages, but most of the content on Wattpad was written in English. They also claim that in 2016, there were 45 million people in a month who had access to

Wattpad. In Wattpad, there are more than 300 million stories that can be read. Wattpad can be read through computers, handphones, and tablets, making it easy to participate by using the media, but most of the users access the application by the smartphone, which they can do anytime and anywhere they want.

Wattpad is usually used as a medium or a place to gather between readers and writers. Where readers can read for free the contents contained in Wattpad, and writers are given the freedom to write whatever they want. Like social media in general, Wattpad allows user to interact with fellow users by giving comments to each other. Thus, the user can make a friend and build friendship networking, so they can share anything related to writing and reading with users around the world.

To make it easy, Wattpad provides various features, such as Home, Library, Create a story, Notification, and Profil. The home panel consists of two main tabs menus, Browse (which contains a list of the genre of stories) and Recommended (which usually contains collections of popular stories). In the Library menus, there are three features, Current read, Archive, and Reading list. When we put the stories in the Library menu, we can read those stories even when we are offline. Create a story menu function as a place to write a work and publish it so that it can be read by other users. The notification panel consists of 3 features, News Feed (usually contains updates from friends such as new story recommendations, interesting stories, and others), Notification (contains lists of notifications that are more personal or related to our story, readings, or writing that you are published), and Message (which have similar function with the message in handphone or Inbox in Facebook, where you can exchange messages with contacts on Wattpad). Panel Profil has two tab menus, About (which contains the personal data) and Conversation (which has a similarity with Wall on Facebook).

There are other features like Vote (as a form of appreciation for the stories), Comment (to give input, critics, advice, or suggestion about the story to the author), Share (to share the stories through other applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.), Invite a friend (to invite friends who have similar interests to try using Wattpad), and Community (contains various forum which related with reading and writing where we can join into them).

Using Wattpad to improve writing and critical thinking skills

Nowadays, the use of Wattpad is popular among young people. As mentioned before that, Wattpad is one of the social media, especially for those who have an interest in reading and writing. Its use has become an interesting phenomenon where the existence of Wattpad has changed reading and writing habits. By using Wattpad, people can read and write anytime and anywhere they want, and it is more flexible instead of having to carry a physical book when they want to read.

There are some ways to improve writing and critical thinking skills through Wattpad, which can try by students. Starting with reading, because as we know, the more we read, more knowledge we can get. When the students read some stories, they can find new information that they did not know before. Besides, reading can stimulate imagination, which can motivate the students to write their own stories.

The students should write continuously, and the teacher observes by giving feedback about their writing. An effective strategy for extending students' conceptual understanding and improving their writing skills is to provide multiple opportunities for them to receive feedback. John Hattie (1992) concluded that the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. Teachers often discover that providing students with feedback in terms of specific levels of knowledge and skill is better than simply providing students with a percentage score (Marzano 2001).

The students can get feedback not only from the teacher. They can ask fellow users to give some comments, suggestions, even criticism to make their writing better. Like so-

cial media in general, Wattpad offers a free digital environment, feedback, and an experimental environment for new and even experienced writers (Ramdarshan Bold, 2018). It means that through Wattpad, the users not only read and write but they can also interact with fellow users to get and share information or new knowledge related to writing. They can also build a friendship and make own community between the writer or even between writers and readers.

Realize or not that reading can also change the students thinking way to think critically. Critical thinking will lead to critical writing. Critical writing is about how to present an effective argument. It is a process that involves using a range of writing skills as well as personal qualities. For most students, learning to write and becoming a competent writer requires deliberate instruction (Raban & Scull, 2013), which typically occurs in school settings. While many students are interacting in cyber social networks and using multimedia and digital tools to communicate in their everyday lives—particularly those students from higher socioeconomic classes (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008)—their school writing experiences are often quite different. Therefore, including social media as a medium in the learning process might be effective in improving student's writing skills as long as it uses wisely needed.

Wattpad might not be an appropriate medium to help the students in their learning process, because some contents might be inappropriate for the student, i.e., adult content. However, if seen that the people in the age school are very interested in using Wattpad, it is no wonder for the teacher to make Wattpad an alternative medium to help them to achieve their goals. In this case, the role of teachers, parents and the students themselves to avoid inappropriate content is required.

5. Conclusions

From the explanation above, it can conclude some point that Wattpad is a social media that can be used not only for reading, it also provides the features for writing. It became a popular writing and reading application among students since most of the users are a teenager in the age school. Wattpad also has become an interesting phenomenon since its existence has changed writing and reading habit. Wattpad gives the facilities for readers to give some comments and criticism directly on work. Wattpad also gives opportunities for the students to publish their works themselves. The student can get the references by reading various stories from different genres on Wattpad. Reading can stimulate not only students' thinking way to critical thinking, but it can also inspire students to start to write. The users can build a network of friends where they can share advice and experiences related to writing so that it can help fellow users improve their writing skills. Using Wattpad as a medium to improve student's critical writing and thinking skills will be effective when we can use Wattpad wisely because in Wattpad a lot of content might not be appropriate for students. The ability of students to choose appropriate content is also a form of critical thinking.

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