PROMOTING SELF-REGULATED LEARNING OF VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BLENDED ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Improving the English writing skill of Vocational High School students seems to be a challenge for Indonesian teachers generally due to some factors, such as a limited time allotted for English classes. As for the limited time, students need to be encouraged in improving their English skills in various settings, including online classes. This article reflects how the blended learning model conducted during *Penugasan Dosen di Sekolah* program at SMK N 4 Yogyakarta brought some impacts on encouraging students to develop their self-regulated strategies during online sessions. It also outlines the strategies applied by the instructor and potential drawbacks in getting the students involved in a blended environment.

Keywords: *self-regulated learning, vocational high school, blended environment*

Introduction

The program of *Penugasan Dosen di Sekolah* (PDS), as a part of Indonesian government programs in education, requires lecturers to teach in partner schools to improve the quality of educational instructions as its main objective. Being involved in this program, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa has assigned some of its lecturers to teach at various schools in Yogyakarta, from elementary to senior high school levels. In conducting the program, the lecturers are to collaborate with the teachers of the schools in order to find problems in their teaching-learning process, and to suggest possible ways to solve the problems. In that way, both lecturers and teachers may learn how improve the quality of such process by applying certain models and strategies dealing with the problems found in the classes, as well as learning from each other.

This paper serves as a reflective essay by outlining some findings related to the strategies conducted during the implementation of the program in SMK N 4 Yogyakarta. It is a vocational high school offering programs in Hotel Accommodation, Travel and Tourism Industry, Culinary, Hair and Skincare, Spa and Beauty Therapy, and Fashion Designing.

The implementation of the PDS program in the class XII of Fashion Designing found some problems in English teaching, especially related to the

limited time allotted for English classes. As the school implemented the 2013 Curriculum, it allocates only two hours a week for English class, in which one hour equals to 45 minutes. This time allocation is considered to be very limited by most English teachers as they do not have sufficient time to deliver all materials as well as to ensure each student has appropriate understanding of the materials. Nevertheless, students of vocational schools are required to comprehend both knowledge and skills of English related to their competencies and also English tested on the National Exam. This condition inevitably gives extra burden for vocational school teacher in designing their classes to meet their students' needs.

It is under this condition that the PDS program was implemented in SMK N 4 Yogyakarta. Following the syllabus set for the selected class, the PDS program could only be conducted once a week of two-hour meeting, or 90 minutes. The original lesson plan designed by the school teacher was about writing report, divided in four meetings. This situation brought a problem to the PDS program itself since it requires eight meetings for conducting classes. To solve the problems, Blended Learning model was selected to apply due to some prior considerations: report writing was considered as a difficult subject for high school students as they had to write and present their report in English; the time allocation for class meeting alone was not sufficient to reach the lesson objective; students were more interested in using their gadgets for learning; blended learning model gave opportunities for both teacher and students to extend their classes even after the conventional class finished (Pape 23). These considerations are in accordance with a research finding in Turkish high school stating that students achieved higher in their academic grades compared to the traditional learning environment (Kazu and Demirkol 85).

This essay is intended to be a reflection of the program implementation by highlighting how the blended environment built during the program was able to motivate students to develop their self-regulated learning strategies. It is a qualitative essay that addresses the issue by discussing the strategies of self-regulated learning developed by the students based on Zimmerman and Martinez's SRL strategies model. In collecting the data to support this study, various methods were employed including observation, documentation, and interviews. The data were, then, analyzed based on the SRL strategies model.

Discussion

Why blended learning

In order to implement the PDS program completely, eight meetings should be conducted properly. As mentioned before, the time arrangement for English classes provided by the school did not allow PDS lecturers to conduct their teaching practice for eight times. To solve the problem, the blended learning model was chosen to be implemented since this model enabled teachers to have more meetings besides the traditional ones.

Blended learning model is defined as a combination of two different learning models, traditional or face-to-face learning and online learning or distance learning (Nguyen; Pape; Tjandra Irawan and Sutadji; Means et al.). The online learning model is mostly chosen by teachers because it offers more flexible access to materials and instructions in different times and places favored by learners (Nguyen 3). Learners may select their own time and certain place to access the lesson contents by using any resources they already have. Learners may also spend their time studying any materials at any pace they like.

Self-Regulated Learning

The term self-regulated learning (SRL) has long been discussed in academic forums. The topic has appeared since 1980s as people started to recognize values of personal initiative in learning, similar to what was suggested by Gardner that the ultimate objective of an education system is to ensure how individuals realize that education is actually their own responsibilities (B. J. Zimmerman 3). Under this term, learners are seen as being confident, diligent, and resourceful when approaching their educational tasks and are fully aware of certain knowledge and skills they already possess, or they do not. It can be said that a self-regulated learners are autonomous learners who actively gather information and ways to solve their problems in doing an educational task (B. J. Zimmerman; Winne and Perry; Wandler and Imbriale; Wang, C., Shannon, D. M., & Ross). Furthermore, Zimmerman argued that self-regulated learning strategies refer to any behaviors and processes taken by learners in gathering information by using any resources, instruments, and arrangements directed to their objectives (B. J. Zimmerman; B. Zimmerman). By doing those processes, learners are expected to develop their metacognitive to support their learning progresses. This process should also be supported by learners being motivated to achieve their goals. Such motivation can be possibly gained from teachers as they are monitoring their students' works or from themselves by doing continual evaluation. Learners may ask themselves some questions on how well they approach the task, and what ways they can do to solve their problems.

In other words, the distinguished features of self-regulated learners are their awareness of having strategies in finding a relation between the learning processes and expected outcomes and how they use those strategies to achieve the goals.

The strategies used in this study were taken from the self-regulated behaviors proposed by Zimmerman and Martinez (Zimmerman and Martinez 618). Among these strategies, 14 strategies are initiated by students themselves or self-initiated strategies, and one other (strategy 15) is classified as non-self-regulated behavior as it is initiated by other parties, such as teachers, parents, or others. This model is selected as it can clearly identify kinds of strategies employed by students involved in the blended environment and is easily observed.

Categories of Strategies		Definitions
1.	Self-evaluation	Student-initiated evaluations of the quality or progress of their work
2.	Organizing and transforming	Student-initiated overt or covert rearrangement of instructional materials to improve learning
3.	Goal-setting and planning	Student setting of educational goals or sub-goals and planning for sequencing, timing, completing activities related to those goals
4.	Seeking information	Student-initiated efforts to secure further task information from nonsocial sources when undertaking an assignment
5.	Keeping records and monitoring	Student-initiated efforts to record events and results
6.	Environmental structuring	Student-initiated efforts to select or arrange the physical setting to make learning easier
7.	Self-consequences	Student arrangement or imagination of rewards or punishment for success or failure
8.	Rehearsing and memorizing	Student-initiated efforts to memorize material by overt or covert practice
9 – 11.	Seeking social assistance	Student-initiated efforts to solicit help from (9) peers, (10) teachers, and (11) adults
12 – 14.	Reviewing records	Student-initiated efforts to reread (12) texts, (13) notes, or (14) textbooks to prepare class or further testing
15.	Other	Learning behavior that is initiated by other persons, e.g. teachers, parents, and all unclear verbal responses

SRL Strategies Developed by the Students

During the implementation of PDS program, students are engaged in project-based learning method learning about report writing. The conventional class meetings, face-to-face, provided materials about *adiwiyata* (a local content required by the school) of re-using fabric remnants to produce functional products, as well as report writing procedures and explanations. In the class, students learn vocabulary related to their report writing, especially about the re-use of fabric remnants and report writing. In doing the classroom task, students were also encouraged to work independently or in groups. As the class was set as a blended environment, during the meetings, students were allowed to use any

resources they have, especially by accessing the Internet. In doing such things, students were encouraged to be resourceful and managed their own ways in gathering information. During the face-to-face meetings, students were observed to employ certain SRL strategies such seeking information, environmental structuring, and seeking social assistance. In order to collect the data for their reports, students needed to gather information about their industrial training place, e.g. about the owner of the place, its products, their objectives, etc. to complete the first part of their reports. In gathering this information, students actively contacted the owners of the businesses or by searching the information on the Internet. They also discussed and confirmed some information with their peers, either from their own groups or other groups. Working within a group, students were required to manage their tasks and delegated the tasks equally among the members of the groups. Being aware of their own resourcefulness, some students volunteered themselves to organize their own group or searching certain information.

Those strategies were further promoted through online works when all students were engaged in online classes by using Google Classroom. This platform was used not only during the online classes, but also in classroom. Since the class was designed as a blended environment, students need to be fully engaged in both conventional and online classes. Students found it was beneficial for installing the Google Classroom application on their smartphones, to ensure all tasks and materials shared in the English class were updated. Though some students had technical problems in having the application on their phones, their peers were willing to help by offering their phones or informing upcoming tasks and materials. During the class meetings, students arranged their chairs so that they could communicate easily within their own groups; during the online classes, students communicated using other messaging applications, such as *Whatsapp* to communicate to each other. The strategy of seeking social assistance, especially from their peers, could also be observed during the online sessions while dealing with task completion. The project of writing a report asked the students to compose and submit parts of their report online. Students used the feature of asking and giving comments on the Google Classroom while working on their own task.

After materials were uploaded on the platform, students were required to read the materials and worked on the task, setting their own time and resources. While working on their tasks, students were observed to have some prior activities, such as gathering information or pictures needed to complete the tasks. By having those resources ready on hand, students found it easier to complete the task online. When having some difficulties in completing some tasks, students did not hesitate to contact their teachers for getting assistance, either by sending comments in the Google Classroom or by using other messaging application. By doing so, students also developed their communicative skills.

While working with their final task in their project, i.e. presenting their report, students were asked to submit their presentation in video format. Students

should record them doing presentation at home by using a video recorder and submitted the video online. In completing this task, students could decide their own settings, time and place, for recording their groups presenting the reports. The results show that most students were being more confident in presenting their reports while being recorded because they did not have to present in front of their peers and teacher. They also indicated that they were more comfortable in presenting using the video. Students also developed the strategy of rehearsing and memorizing in presenting their reports. Before recording themselves, students did one or two rehearsals to delegate tasks among their members, and also to find the best angle to shot the video. They found that it was easier from them to speak on the video when they did not have to read their reports; thus, they needed to memorize important points taken from their reports. Students did their best efforts especially when they talked about their products made from fabric remnants found in their industrial training places. The videos were then uploaded on the Google Classroom for every student to watch and give comments. Most of the students gave positive feedbacks to other groups' videos, showed their appreciations, and gave good comments.

Strategies Applied by the Lecturer

Dealing with different characteristics of the students, the lecturer of PDS program who acted as the teacher developed different strategies to encourage students meeting the lesson requirements and achieving its objective. While most studies address self-regulated learning employed by university students (Zimmerman and Martinez; Wandler and Imbriale; B. Zimmerman; Bandura; Wang, C., Shannon, D. M., & Ross; Iqbal et al.), this paper studies how vocational high school students developed their self-regulated learning strategies in a blended environment. Hence, several different learners' characteristics exist among them. One characteristic possessed by these students are the need of being monitored by the teachers. This characteristic of the students may serve as a drawback while learning in a blended environment since students cannot fully develop their self-regulated strategies if they rely on the teachers' monitoring activities. This can be solved, nevertheless, by encouraging the students to do self-monitoring activities or by doing the activity in traditional class meetings. Thus, students can still develop their SRL strategies during their online sessions, while the teacher can monitor the students' progresses during traditional classes. Teachers may also contact the group leader and have them report the progress of each member as well as their group; accordingly, other students will not feel being monitored, so that they may develop their SRL strategies better.

Teachers also need to provide clear instructions and materials during online classes to guarantee that all students understand any tasks they have to complete. It is also important to select topics and materials properly; materials provided should be appropriate to be learned online. The material of report writing was considered to be appropriate for online classes as it required students to compose writing texts – a language skill that needs longer time for students to

complete. Providing more time for students to complete the writing task may help them build self-efficacy and confidence.

Potential Drawbacks

Though having many benefits, administering a blended learning may also possess some potential drawback due to some reasons, such as the characteristics of the students, the school policy, and lack of resources. Learners may have different learning characteristics; some may be independent in recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses, others may need to be fully supported by the teachers during their learning processes. Students who insufficiently develop SRL strategies may have some difficulties in dealing with online tasks and assignments. They may lack of initiatives to access other resources for gathering information, or cannot select and develop good strategies to deal with various tasks.

Learners may also not easily recognize what strategies they already develop or need to develop when a clear instruction is absent. Therefore, it is important to ensure that all students have understood the instructions clearly and know what they have to do in order to complete their tasks. Instructions can be provided verbally in traditional class meetings or clearly written using simple instructional language on online classes. Students also need to know what reward or punishment they will receive upon a completion of a task or a failure to do so.

Other technical problems, such as unsupportive devices, and poor signal of the Internet, should also be considered as potential drawbacks since those problems may influence the learning process in a blended class. Students who possess such problems may have difficulties in getting engaged with online sessions, though those situations may also encourage students to develop some SRL strategies, such as finding helps from peer.

Conclusion

The PDS program implementation brought some new insights on how a blended environment may support vocational high school students to build SRL strategies while dealing with both traditional and online classes. Having a blended learning model has made it possible to have eight meetings as required by the program; a situation that once became a problem for English teaching because vocational high school only allocates two meetings in a week. This model can be a solution for having additional meetings by conducting online sessions that can be scheduled at any times and any places. Administering online classes also attracts more attention from the students who find it more interesting in using their gadgets for accessing classes.

By conducting online classes, students are engaged in a blended environment. The characteristics of this environment is slight different from the traditional one since it requires students to possess SRL strategies while dealing with online tasks. Students may find those strategies useful when they are in

college, later. By possessing SRL strategies students may also recognize their own strengths and weaknesses by doing self-evaluation. Students who have good SRL strategies tend to complete the tasks before the due date and meet all requirements and deadlines set by their teachers. They also show willingness to help other students who seek for their help in dealing with problems related to the online classes. By doing so, students learn how to build good SRL strategies.

Setting a deadline for completing an online task may also help teachers to deal with students who do not fully develop their SRL strategies. In order to ensure that all students fulfill the deadlines, teachers need to monitor each student's progress. For senior high school students who have not fully developed SRL strategies, it is necessary for teachers to closely monitor the students' progresses so that the objectives of the lesson could be easily reached. In some cases, monitoring administered in traditional setting is more effective than self-evaluation since some senior high school students may not develop self-awareness yet. Thus, it is necessary for teachers to monitor their students' progress based on their characteristics.

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