Exploring Needs of Academic Writing Course for LMS in the New Normal: A Development of EFL Materials

Hanna Sundari1(*), Leonard2
1English Education Department, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI Jakarta, Indonesia
2Math Education Department, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract
Received: July 16, 2020
Revised: January 7, 2021
Accepted: January 8, 2021
Along with the university policy for remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and the new normal era, learning management system (LMS) become one of various alternative system to handle online learning. However, its application needs to be well-prepared and well-designed. This present study was a need analysis as an initial stage in developing Moodle LMS-based EFL Materials for academic writing course at university. The participants were 67 students from academic writing course. A questionnaire was major instrument to find out the learning needs and context, accompanied by documentation to seek the activities and materials on the existing course. The results show the needs of academic writing course and the proposed EFL materials through Moodle LMS. Student-participants revealed that the course should be able to improve students’ writing skill in developing academic texts through essay development and research article. Moreover, process writing approach and genre-based approach become the most preferable approach for teaching with a plenty of sample texts in PDF format. The students-participants also thought that teacher-feedback, individual project-based assessment, completed by a real-time online session or synchronous mode are the best for online learning through LMS. The proposed Moodle LMS-based EFL materials apparently adopts the steps of process genre-based approach and a framework of Bloom’s digital taxonomy.

Keywords: EFL academic writing, digital taxonomy, LMS, material development, need analysis

(*) Corresponding Author: hanna.sundari@gmail.com


INTRODUCTION

After the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) and the number of cases outside China increased 13-fold within 2 weeks, WHO announced it a global pandemic (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). In the middle of March, public schools in 107 countries were closed and the school closures affected 862 million children and young people, almost a half of student population worldwide (Viner et al., 2020). This was an attempt to reduce social contacts and interrupt the transmission.

Due to its outbreak, Indonesian government has issued two regulations on early April 2020; the government regulation and Health Ministry regulation to impose a large-scale social restriction or PSBB (Sutrisno, 2020). It means to implement a partial lockdown. In a field of education, the decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 4 year 2020 issued four main points in implementing distance learning or learning from home with some consideration to the life skills, learning barrier and facilities at home (Yulia, 2020).
These policies resulted in the schools and university closures, and they changed the teaching system into remote teaching and online learning (Purwanto et al., 2020). It can also be said as pembelajaran jarak jauh (PJJ).

The sudden change to switch the teaching mode comes with inevitable consequences for both teachers and students. Though online distance learning can be an effective solution for this crisis situation, some barriers are also predictable, such as poor internet connection, budget, limited facilities at home, and health problems due to longer screen time (Heliandry, Nurhasanah, Suban, & Kuswanto, 2020). In fact, Fauzi, Hermawan, and Khusuma (2020) have surveyed 45 elementary teachers in Banten and found that they are aware of online learning as a need during the pandemic though they face some difficulties. They include a low facility, internet usage and connection, planning, implementing and evaluating the learning process as well as collaboration with parents.

At university level, most of the students in Indonesia have experienced online learning for the first time during the pandemic. Some of them, from Kendari (Anhusadar, 2020), perceived that online teaching mode is somewhat helpful. Meanwhile, some students from Makassar (Suwarjo, Sukmawati, Akhiruddin, Ridwan, & Siradjuddin, 2020) revealed that they feel positive and interested in applying online learning, though it was not entirely efficient. However, students on both research yielded that ‘back to campus’ was more preferable (Anhusadar, 2020; Suwarjo et al., 2020).

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), a recent study by Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) has investigated how EFL teachers carry out EFL learning and its challenges. They found that a variety of application and platforms and a series of activities were employed; from LMS to additional sources and either synchronous or asynchronous mode. Despite the attempts and arrangement, the research showed that the online learning seems to end with failure because it lacked preparation and planning. Therefore, online learning should be well-prepared with knowledge and skill dealt with the subject-matter, pedagogy, and technology. And need analysis can be an initial step in course preparation.

The fact that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has no sign of abating immediately aspires the distance learning as one of several options on teaching system at university. Speaking on the Indonesian Rectors Forum through virtual conference on early July 2020, President Joko Widodo has recommended online learning as a default teaching system for universities in Indonesia. As cited from thejakartapost.com, the president said that this kind of teaching system has become a ‘new normal’ – even the next normal (Fachrianiy, 2020). Moreover, the implementation of online learning course uses various technological devices or tools. Those can be digital mobile application, video conferencing software, learning platforms, and learning management system. The latter, known as LMS, has become everywhere, approximately 99% of colleges and universities reporting they employ an LMS in place (Dahlstrom, Brooks, & Bichsel, 2014).

In a very simple way, LMS is an online portal that connects lecturer and students and provides an avenue to share classroom materials and activity (Adzharuddin, 2013). Historically speaking, LMS was derived from the generic terms such as computer-based instruction (CBI), computer-assisted instruction (CAI), and computer-assisted learning (CAL), but at present days, the term LMS refers to a number of different educational computer applications that handles all element of learning process, such as distributing and managing instructional content, identifying and evaluating instructional goal, tracking the progress, and handling course registration and administration (Watson & Watson, 2007).

Compare to other computer educational term, LMS has specific systemic nature. The general characteristics of LMS are as follow (Bailey, 1993 cited by Watson & Watson, 2007): 1) instructional objectives are tied to individual lessons, 2) lessons are incorporated into the standardized curriculum, 3) courseware extends several grade levels in a consistent
manner, 4) a management system collects the results of student performance, 5) lessons are provided based on the individual student’s learning progress. Examples of the most popular LMSs are Canvas, Sakai CLE, MOODLE, Blackboard, Desire2learn, and eCollege (Dahlstrom et al., 2014). Additionally, Simonson (2007, cited in Chung, Pasquini, & Koh, 2013) brought more practical definition to LMSs, which is also known as course management system (CMS), as software systems designed to assist in the management of educational courses for students, especially by helping teachers and learners with course administration.

Table 1. A Comparison of Open Source LMSs (Cavus & Zabadi, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of LMS</th>
<th>Ilias</th>
<th>Sakai</th>
<th>Moodle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard/ video</td>
<td>No Whiteboard</td>
<td>No whiteboard</td>
<td>Interactive whiteboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Sakai-Dev group</td>
<td>Active forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File Exchange</td>
<td>Internal email system</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
<td>Available in easy way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Journal mail</td>
<td>Different publishing</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
<td>A journal module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-time chat</td>
<td>An independent JAVA based chat</td>
<td>Wikis, chat, blogs</td>
<td>A real-time synchronous discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The availability of LMSs can be either commercial for a price or at no cost or open source. Open source LMSs means that the software is open to public; modification and improvement of the source code are possible to meet the needs (Cavus & Zabadi, 2014). Some of the open source LMS are ATutor, Claroline, Dokeos, Ilias, Sakai and Moodle. The comparison of features among three open source LMSs can be seen on table 1. Cavus & Zabadi (2014) revealed that, among the open source LMSs, Moodle comes at the first position, with its user-friendly interface and accessibility, which serves more than 70 million users worldwide on June 2013. Almost similar result was also revealed by Machado and Tao (2007) when comparing Blackboard and Moodle. They concluded that in the aggregate when the systems were compared in their entireties, that the Moodle learning management system was the preferred choice of the users.

Despite its complexity, risks and cost, the uptake of LMS in campuses and universities are rapidly growing. It seems that LMS offers some attractiveness to the universities. Coates, James, and Baldwin (2005) wrote that LMS brings at least six elements of attractiveness. At first, LMS provides a means of increasing the efficiency of teaching for delivering large-scale resource-based learning programmes. Secondly, it is dealt with the promise of enriched student learning. Next element of LMS is that LMS fulfils the student expectation, advanced technology. The other elements of attractiveness are competitive pressure of institutions, demands of greater access, and part of important culture shift.

Along with the acceptance and usage of LMSs at university, studies dealt with its effectiveness have been extensively conducted based on either the users’ point of view or evaluation of system and management. Lonn, Teasley, and Krumm (2011) surveyed the students on both residential and commuter campuses which used Sakai community course architecture and found that most students perceived course-related activities available within LMS were valuable. Moreover, Kakasevki, Mihajlov, Arsenovski, and Chungurski (2008) evaluated the usability of Moodle as a system and an individual module on the faculty of Informatics and faculty of Economic Science. They reported that Moodle uses well known e-tools for communication: online chat, forum, e-mail; however, some of these
modules are not well developed. At the university of Belgrade, Horvat, Dobrota, Krzmanovic, and Cudanov (2015) investigated the students’ perceptions about the use of Moodle LMS and found that students that use a Moodle LMS only before an exam have a significantly lower satisfaction and significance of quality characteristic rating when compared to students who use it on daily basis.

Furthermore, the use of LMSs for language learning and teaching has also been widely known. And its advantages have been empirically proven; for example, learning language through Moodle-based teaching materials impede the process of being autonomous language learners (Khabbaz & Najjar, 2015). In Malaysia, LMS has helped the university students to improve their writing as well as to enhance their understanding of certain topics through explanation and examples given by their peers and their lecturers (Hamat, Azman, Noor, Bakar, & Nor, 2014). Moreover, in teaching a foreign language, Moodle LMS has facilitated a number of benefits over traditional system particularly in organizing individual work (Anatolievna, 2018). For writing class, the application of LMS has resulted in positive and encouraging student feedback. It is indicating that students, with Moodle LMS in Hong Kong, genuinely enjoyed the integration of technology (Cheung, Fong, & Wong, 2006) as well as favourable attitudes toward the application of Edmodo social network LMS in writing classes in Iran (Ma’azi & Janfeshan, 2018). Meanwhile in Thailand, study by Pumjarean, Muangnakin, and Tuntinakkhongul (2017) found that Moodle LMS is a feasible and cost-effective educational technology for developing EFL students’ grammar and writing skills in a blended-eLearning environment.

Specifically for teaching academic writing skill, Blackboard LMS has given positive effects toward academic writing and attitude through facilitating interactions and scaffolding learning; the longer students’ experiences the more positive attitude towards the use of Blackboard to enhance academic literacy (Fageeh & Mekheimer, 2013). Furthermore, an experimental study by Imran (2020) showed that Schoology LMS increased the students’ writing achievement.

Teaching English writing at university level has with large opportunity and autonomy (Widiati & Cahyono, 2001), but it does not come without any constraints, such as large class sizes, unique teaching and learning approaches and ideologies that affect L2 writing instruction (Bhowmik, 2009). As a consequence, an analysis of the students’ needs in writing class seems necessary and important, as stated by Richards (2001) that “a sound educational program should be based on analysis of learners’ needs”. An investigation related to the needs at university has been conducted in the field of language teaching; for example a study by Sundari, Febriyanti, and Saragih (2016) which analysed the needs of EFL writing class for undergraduate students in developing task-based syllabus and materials. However, the need analysis in development of EFL materials to serve LMS has not yet been investigated. Therefore, as a course preparation to face remote online teaching through LMS in the new normal era, this study becomes urgent and essential. It aimed to describe the needs of academic writing course through Moodle LMS from students’ viewpoint, and it was addressed the following research question: what are the students’ needs in EFL materials for academic writing course using Moodle LMS?

METHODS

This present study was an initial stage of research and development of EFL materials for academic writing course using Moodle LMS in English Education Department, Faculty of Postgraduate Program at one private university in Jakarta. To fulfill the research purpose, the steps of the system approach model of educational research and development by Dick, Carey and Carey (2001, cited by Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003) was
adopted. The need analysis assessed in identifying course goal/s and objectives, conducting instructional analysis dan analysing learners and context.

The participants were 67 students (41 females and 26 males), with age ranged between 22 to 57 years old, who registered on academic writing course through remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, participants’ backgrounds of education (graduate degree) are various though most of them graduated from English education major (82.1%), as seen on Fig. 1.

![Figure 1. Participants' Educational Background](image)

For collecting data, an online questionnaire was distributed as a major instrument to explore the students’ preferences when the course runs through LMS. The item questions were to discover some aspects: 1) course goal/objectives, 2) teaching principles and approach, 3) content materials, 4) format of content materials, 5) writing activities, 6) types of feedback, 7) types of writing assessment/evaluation, and 8) virtual learning mode. In addition, some documents, such as syllabus, worksheets, materials and activities during the existing course sessions were collected to depict the existing materials and course activities. As a result, the information from the data covers two dimensions: present (what is being taught) and future (what needs to be taught, why and how it is being taught).

The information as the research data were then analysed quantitatively using percentages, interpreted, and presented in the forms of various layout, such as tables, chart, and description. Moreover, the results of the need analysis became a consideration in developing content materials for academic writing course through Moodle LMS, and the proposed EFL materials were discussed and presented.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

This present study analysed the needs of academic writing course for English Education Department, Faculty of Postgraduate Program, as an initial stage in developing Moodle LMS-based EFL materials. Meanwhile, the data is presented in two parts: the needs and the proposed Moodle LMS-based EFL materials.
The Needs of Academic Writing Course

Academic writing course is one of compulsory subjects at English Education Department. It is designed for fourteen meetings including mid-test and final test with three credits. On the existing course, content materials are essay development with several text-types or genre, such as comparison/contrast essay, cause/effect essay, argumentative essay, and a research article. Most of the content materials are prepared for face-to-face teaching system using some format, such as PDF file and PPT presentation. Meanwhile book reference was Writing Academic English fourth edition by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue. During the remote teaching on the Covid-19 pandemic, the course was suddenly run through several digital platforms, such as Google Classroom, WhatsApp mobile messenger application, and Zoom video conferencing. For next course, Moodle LMS will be applied to facilitate the teaching learning sessions.

Learner needs of academic writing course through LMS includes nine aspects as given on the questionnaire. The first aspect was goal or objectives of the course. The majority of the student-participant thought that academic writing course should be designed to enable the students to write a research article for academic purposes. Meanwhile, paragraph and essay development were also preferable respectively. The students’ preferences on course goal/objective can be seen on table 2.

Table 2. Students’ Responses on Course Goal/Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Goal/ Objectives</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>understand and develop various types of well-organized paragraphs</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outline and develop various types of well-structured essays</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop critical thinking and argumentation</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing summaries (paraphrasing, summarizing and combining sources)</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write a publishable research article</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Related to the learning principles and teaching approach for academic writing course, most of the student-participants preferred process writing approach which serves the steps of prewriting-drafting-revising. The other preferences of teaching principles and approaches was displayed on table 3.

Table 3. Students’ Responses of Teaching Principles and Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Principles and Approaches</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructive gradual principles (from simple to complex)</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative/ Cooperative learning</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating higher order thinking skills</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre-based approach/ Text-based instruction</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process writing approach (prewriting-drafting- revising)</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product approach (controlled writing-guided writing-freer writing)</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dealt with the materials, table 4 shows the students’ preferences on content topics. Similar to the course goal and objectives, how to write a publishable research paper possessed the highest response among the student-participants.
Table 4. Students’ Responses on Content Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Topics</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to paraphrase, summarize, and combine sources</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to write various types of well-organized paragraphs</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to outline and write various types of well-structured essays</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to write a research article for publication</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the question about material delivery, all formats given on the options gained quite large response. It indicates that student-participants had a desire on a combination of materials delivery. However, the most preferred format was providing a great number of sample texts on PDF files. The percentages of the material delivery can be seen on figure 2.

![Figure 2. Students’ Responses on Material Delivery](image)

Concerning to the writing activities and exercises during the session, the students-participants thought that essay development the most preferable. Additionally, paragraph development and discussion forum were also more desirable among other activities, as seen on figure 3.

![Figure 3. Students’ Responses on Writing Activities](image)

On feedback on the student’s writing product, most of student-participants, equals 88.1%, considered that teacher-feedback more preferable than peer-feedback (40.3%). Moreover, for assessing academic writing, they perceived that individual project-based assessment was more effective than group-project based assessment and individual sitting.
examination, with the percentages 74.6%, 37.3%, and 22.4% respectively. Related to virtual learning mode, student-participants perceived that real-time online session or synchronous mode with 64.2% on percentage was more preferable than asynchronous mode.

The Proposed Moodle-based EFL Materials for Academic Writing

Considering the learner needs and context, the materials contain several texts in academic genre in the form of essays, such as cause/effect essay dan argumentative essay, and research article. This supports the course goal/objectives in developing students’ writing skill and enabling them to write several texts in academic genre proficiently and confidently.

Process-genre approach to teaching writing is adopted as teaching principles and approach integrated with other approaches. Process-genre approach (PGA) for teaching writing is a combination of process approach and genre-based approach (Badger & White, 2000; Nordin & Mohammad, 2006). This approach has extensively used and effectively helped in teaching writing, such as report text (Pujianto, Emilia, & Sudarsono, 2014), hortatory exposition text (Handayani, Jufrizal, & Hamzah, 2014; Rizkiyah, 2017), academic writing and writing skill in general (Alabere & Shapii, 2019; Rustinovci, 2015; Tuyen, Osman, Dan, & Ahmad, 2016).

Moreover, to cultivate students’ critical thinking and argumentation, a framework of Bloom’s digital taxonomy (Churches, 2009 in Wedlock & Growe, 2017) is also adopted. It is the updated Bloom’s revised version. A number of digital additions is embedded to each key term in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. Digital additions are a set of action verbs to show digital activities, such as browsing, googling, uploading, sharing, collaborating, and publishing.

CONCLUSION

This present research was a need analysis as an initial stage at EFL material development for academic writing course through Moodle LMS for English Education Department. Based on the students’ needs and context, the course is designed to develop students’ writing skill in academic genre. Process genre approach and Genre-based approach are the most preferable teaching approaches. Students though that essay development and research article are the content materials discussed and practised on the sessions with a plenty of sample texts in PDF files. Moreover, they also perceived that teacher-feedback, individual project-based assessment, and real-time online session or synchronous mode are the best for online learning through LMS. After having collected information about the needs and context of the course through Moodle LMS, a brief concept of proposed Moodle based-EFL materials for academic writing is presented. It is adopted steps of process genre-based approach to teaching writing and a framework of Bloom’s digital taxonomy. Next stage of the process is to develop the Moodle-based EFL materials for academic writing based on in the systematic format and well-structured layout and syllabi. The content materials contain the sequence and presentation for each meeting including learning activity and assessment for each meeting.
REFERENCES


