Teaching Writing by Using Evernote Application

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Abstract. In writing, students may have numerous strategies in organizing their ideas. The technology invention can be utilized as a means in enhancing student’s writing project. One of them is Evernote application as one of the most popular software for keeping and organizing information. This article is aimed at 1) revealing the application of teaching writing by using Evernote as graphic organizer; 2) finding the strengths of using Evernote; and 3) finding the challenges of using Evernote. This article uses library research as a method to gather the information. From the result of study, writing in Evernote is as simple as using a word processor. We need to have a Google account first to sign up to this application. When we have already signed up, we can create “new note.” Once we have finished, give it a title to make it easy to find later and enter texts. The strengths are that Evernote can create different forms including words, audio, and images. Another study also shows that the group of students given graphic organizer can show more rational thought than students without graphic organizer. It also has more interesting display by adding various colors. The challenges for this application are that it requires constant internet connection. It also should be provided by sufficient hardware. Therefore, it is suggested that the institution could provide sufficient means to meet this need. It is because despite of its challenges, this application is beneficial for students and teachers for becoming technology literate in learning process.

1. Introduction

Writing is one of four language skills in English complete the speaking, reading, and listening skill. Among others, it is frequently reflected as the most difficult skill to conquer. It may because it involves many aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, mechanics, and grammar [1]. It adds the challenge to the students in writing.

As consequence, some students might face difficulty in writing. A study conducted by [2] showed that some senior high school students have difficulties in writing academic essays such as lack of variation of ideas in terms of content and ideas; lack of connectives in organization; improper word usage or idiom in terms vocabulary. It was also seen in poor sentence structures in terms of grammar; use of first person pronoun in terms of formality and objectivity; and lack of citations in terms of referencing. This study compares the students of public and private school in Laoag City, Philippines. Another study also show that the students of the College of Education, Nile Valley University, North Sudan have various writing problems, such as language problems in terms of morphology and syntax. Meanwhile, the mechanical
mistakes comes in spelling, punctuation and capitalization. They also lack of several writing development skills, cognitive problems, and graphomotor problems [3]. These study show that one of the students’ problem is in organization.

It is frequently hard to start writing. In beginning a written text, students may have several ways in organizing the ideas. Some students make outlines and follow them as they write. Some others make a sketch by writing down a possible thesis then filling the blank with associated ideas, drawing arrows to create possible connections, and using stars, circles, checkmarks or other signs to divide the ideas. Meanwhile, some others may completely unable to organize the ideas.

Teacher can actually use many strategies or media including the advance of technology in enhancing student’s writing ability. One of them is by using a writing application called as Evernote. Evernote is a web-based notebook that associates the function of a traditional paper book and word processor with the features of information sharing by social media. It is considered as one of the most productive accessible software. Evernote has limitless applications to improve productivity for any employee including instructors, students, and business professionals. It has almost unlimited creative features covering various fields [4]. It is said that there are almost 225 million users worldwide updated in October 2018. It shows that this application is popular.

Evernote in free version offers many features. It can store and organize any kind of information in many different formats. In other words, Evernote changes the old-fashioned paper notebook into an advanced computerized organization tool.

This application actually works best similar to graphic organizer. Graphic organizers are visual thinking tools that create pictures of your thoughts. The pictures reveal relationships between facts, concepts, or ideas, and guide our thought as we plan the map or diagram. There are many types of graphic organizer, such as mind map flow chart, concept map, etc. (Inspiration Software, Inc., 2019). Evernote itself mostly comes in form of table chart. It ranges from various fields not only language. It helps writer to organize his ideas before he develops the writing or notes.

Concerning to the elaboration above, this article is aimed at revealing the application of teaching writing by using Evernote functioned as graphic organizer. It is also aimed at finding the strengths and the challenges of using Evernote application. Additionally, this article also proposes the solution of the challenges.

2. Method
This article uses Classroom observation research as the method. It is a method of straightly observing teaching process, which the observer taking notes, and/or coding instructional performances in the classroom or from recorded activities or lessons [2] and [5]. This method involves the steps namely: 1) The pre-observation briefing. It is merely to know what an observer will be focusing on during the class. In this case it is the application of Evernote in writing; 2) Classroom observation. During the class, an observer make notes based on the items discussed at pre-review briefing; 3) The post-review de-briefing. It is better to conduct this step only within a few days of the class observation to keep the information still well remembered. 4) The final report. This is a synopsis of what was argued in the pre-review briefing. It may also include a conclusion summarizes what has been covered in the report and recommendations for the upcoming teaching [5]. The writers also take advantage from the research discussing about the result of organizing the written text. They are used to strengthen this idea of using Evernote application to promote students’ productivity and creativity in writing.

3. Result and Discussion
To start this application is quite easy. We can visit the site http://evernote.com. Remember that we need to have a Google account first to sign up to this application. When we have already signed up, we can create “new note.” Once we have finished, give it a title to make it easy to find it later and enter texts.
When we have created our note, we can choose the “Template” by clicking the button. There are many types of template offered ranging from various field. Since this article concerns in writing, we can choose the category of “Creative Writing.” There are 4 templates here namely 1) Novel Plotting; 2) Story Dashboard; 3) Character Profile; and 4) Story Premise Worksheet. Each of them has its brief explanation for its function. Here, we choose the “Story Premise Worksheet” by clicking on this template. This template can be used to write recount or narrative text.
Figure 3.3
Choosing the Template

Evernote comes in more interesting layout, such as the ability to add various colors on the template. It is hoped to be able to reduce the students’ bore during the learning process. It is also easy to manage the notes such as deleting the unused ones. We can also search or notes by typing the search query or key word into the bar of “Search all notes.”

Figure 3.4
Coloring the Table Template
In the template of “Worksheet,” student can create the outline for his writing. He can write about the setting, the main character(s), the antagonist (if there is any), the situation, the inciting event, and the conflict. These elements are organized in a table with explanation for each of them. This will make student easier to understand in organizing his ideas. A student can fill the blank column on the right side to create his own story. What makes it easier is that there has been an “Example” column provided for him.

Once we have finished the note, it will be automatically saved into our account. In developing the ideas into complete writing, students can continue to use the word processor (Ms. Word) or the paper notebook.
There are many benefits proposed by this application. Students can organize notes or take pictures of paper handouts; organize schedules, task lists, contacts; and capture photos of classroom activity or drawings on whiteboards. Meanwhile, teacher possibly use Evernote to organize course design and communicate with the students, record a discussion or lecture and make it available in a shared notebook, and deliver speech or written feedback to students [6]. It is seen that this application may replace the previous common method of classical lecturing and paper note taking.

Still based on the study by [6], it is believed that when students begin to experiment and take advantage from technology they can begin to experience the power of technology to transform organizations. They motivate the students to employ a powerful technology in real lives with the expectation that they can see bigger possibilities for themselves and/or the organizations they may later lead.

The function of Evernote as graphic organizer also offers many easies. The outline or graphic organizer will look tidier with the aid of table template. This is because some students sometimes cannot make neat handwriting, which may confuse themselves or the readers. A study by [7] also shows that the group of students given graphic organizer can show more rational thought than students who do not use graphic organizer in writing. A study by [8] mentions that the graphic organizers can improve the students’ writing. The teacher also can perform well in guiding the students to use outline in writing recount text. They conclude that outline can help the students to boost their ideas in writing recount text. These results show that outlining or organizing writing is significant.

The challenges for this application are that it requires constant internet connection. It also should be provided by sufficient hardware. It comes in the form of computer, laptop, or smartphone. Both teacher and student should be able to afford it. In case of the unavailability or limitation of hardware, students can share a laptop. A laptop can be used for two students. This will also allow them to work collaboratively.

4. Conclusion
The advance of technology offers us many easies. In this case, students’ writing is expected to be improved with the aid of Evernote application as the graphic organizer. It offers the ease for both student and teacher in organizing ideas and tasks which then keeping them automatically. On the other hand, the availability of infrastructure should be prioritized. Therefore, it is suggested that the institution could provide sufficient means to meet this need, such as the steady internet connection. It is because despite of its challenges, this application is beneficial for students and teachers for becoming more technology-literate in learning process to face the digital era.

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