

Blogging: Writing in English with Fun Activities

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Blogging: Writing in English with Fun Activities

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the use of blog in English writing activities. Quantitative research with Pre-Experimental One Group Pre-test Post-test was applied to thirty two secondary school students. The result indicated that the blogging activity assisted the students improve their writing ability. Through blog, writing process seemed to be uncomplicated for the students. They could write more easily with various features. They could attach pictures and modify the words directly in addition to changing the theme into more eye-catching look in order to attract the viewers or readers. Commenting online in blog provided the opportunity for peer assessment practice through feedback given to the friends' composition. In a nutshell, blog is an applicable medium for educators in creating communicative online interaction in English language learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

Blog is an online tool used to communicate with other people through cyber world, and mostly the activities are posting texts and comments. Although people including teachers and students in school environment like to share many interesting information through internet like Kaskus, Wikipedia, Bubblews, Tumblr and other social media like Facebook, Twitter, Path, Snapchat, Instagram, and so on, Blog still exists and is potentially used for language learning. Blog offers interesting features for its users to find information (Armstrong & McAdams, 2011). This is in line with (Djuaraskovic & Hines, 2016: 5) who state that blog can be defined as a digital magazine, diary, newscast, a place for selling your things, showcase of your art, information warehouse, place for learning and many more.

Blog literally combines text, picture, videos and links to pages on the Web. Blog readers can give feedback or comments and interact with the author of the blog. For the record, communication and interaction is one of factors that make blog popular. Furthermore, some research proved that teaching with blog could improve English skill in writing (Aziz, 2015; Lutfian, 2011; Zainudin, 2013). However, focusing the writing on how to describe something is

not discussed frequently. In fact, when composing a text, describing something is considered a simple way for the beginner level of language learners although the teachers often find their class difficult to express ideas in descriptive text. Consequently, the researchers try hard to find solution to make it more effective through strategies or media (Piolat & Roussey, 1991; Spurlin, Dansereau, Larson, & Brooks, 1984; Alvermann, 1981).

By explaining how the thing looks like from the picture or other media with teacher's guide, the students are expected to write appropriately from the concrete object. Besides, this process helps them express their thoughts contextually. In addition, the learning will be interesting if the activity is facilitated by online media that can be accessed in their school and home. Accordingly, writing in the situation they like will build their motivation. Plenty of research proved that technology can influence students' interest when studying (Keller, 2008; Lim, 2004; Price & Kadi-Hanifi, 2011; Megawati & Sultoni, 2017). Online learning today is getting closer with educational issues. Therefore, English teachers in 21st century should be creative and innovative to create teaching scenario and accomodate students' need suitable in digital age.

Considering that communication in writing is a crucial skill to introduce, and the need of interesting

way in giving meaningful activity through virtual environment, the researchers believe that blog helps students encourage learning motivation and achievement through writing descriptive text based on the pictures published in the students' blog account.

2 METHOD

Quantitative research design was used in this research. The sample was the seventh graders of state secondary level school in East Java, Indonesia. There were 32 students (18 female and 14 male) who were about 12-13 years old. The students were able to operate internet based program in both for their learning activities and private life.

The procedure in conducting this research was started by pre-test, then it continued with treatment, finally it dealt with post-test. Pre-test was the first observation for the students before they got the treatment, and post-test was the observation data after they got treatment by the researcher. This research could be said success if the result of the students' post-test were higher than the pre-test. Thus, blog as media to improve students' writing descriptive text is effective.

The main instrument of this research is test. The validity and reliability was also checked. Before the researcher collected, the instrument needed to be valid for making an accurate and valid data. In this case, the researcher used construct validity. The researcher used inter-rater reliability. In this model, the test was scored by 2 (two) raters.

Then the data collection is obtained from pre-test and post test scores. In pre-test step, the students needed to write in the piece of paper. After that, they got a treatment which is Blog as the media. The researcher also commanded them to write their work in the blog in order to know their progress of writing descriptive skill. On the other hand, in the post-test section, they should write the descriptive text directly on their own blog, so their work can be seen on the web blog (internet). The purpose of this test is to measure their skill in writing descriptive text. The researcher compared the result of their pre-test and post-test, if there is significant improvement, then it can be concluded that Blog is effective for them.

In scoring, the researcher used scoring rubric adapted from (Oshima & Hogue, 2007: 196). It consists of five aspects of writing—paragraph format; punctuations and mechanics; content; organization; and Grammar.

2.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis is an activity or process of processing data to see how to interpret data, then analyzed the data from output at hand in processing data result stage. Quantitative data was chosen in this study. Quantitative Analysis is analysis that using statistic instrument. The result was given in numerical data then it was explained and interpreted descriptively. The data of this research were obtained from the pre-test and post-test.

The next step was using normality test to know the test had normal distribution or not. The test showed normal distribution; thus, parametric statistic was used with the independent sample t-test. T-test formula was used to prove the hypothesis of the research. T-test is the formula for examining the hypotheses; null hypothesis (H_0) and alternative hypothesis (H_a). The T-test formula that be used as in Figure 1.

$$t = \frac{Md}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum X^2 d}{N(N-1)}}$$

Figure 1: T-test formula.

Notes:

Md = mean from deviation (d) between post-test and pre-test

Xd = the difference between deviation with mean deviation

$\sum x^2 d$ = sum of deviation quadrate

N = sum of sample

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the statistical data, It was discovered that the mean of the students' score in post-test (77.97) was higher than the mean of pre-test (71.67). Thus, there is significant effect before and after given treatment. In other words, the computed data shows the result of $t_{counting}$ is 4.53 and t_{table} is 2.024. It can be said that there is effect of using blog to the students' ability in writing descriptive text.

The result of students in pre-test, most of them have relatively good writing skill. Their problem was on the punctuation and organization. Almost all of them could not write complete generic structure. After finishing the pre-test, the researcher gave the spoiler about the next activity, it is a blogging class.

The researcher had prepared them five blogs for them. They did not need to make on their own for time efficiency.

The treatment activity was held on March 2017. Firstly, the researchers overviewed what blog was and its features, how to use a blog, and how to make the account. Then, the researcher gave the tutorial how to write on the blog and how to post texts. All of the students gave good attention and seemed interested on it. After that, the researchers explained about the descriptive text that they needed to understand in terms of generic structure (i.e. identification and description) and language features. Finally, the researchers asked them to write about the picture they posted directly on the blog in a group. One group consisted of 6-7 students. There were 4 groups as described in Table 2.

Table 2: List of students' Blogs.

Group's Name	Address
Group 01	Grouponesevenc.blogspot.com
Group 02	Grouptwosevenc.blogspot.com
Group 03	Groupthreesevenc.blogspot.com
Group 04	Groupfoursevenc.blogspot.com

Their job was writing directly on the blog the researchers had prepared. The theme was pretty much the same from the pre-test, they needed to write a writing descriptive text about thing in the class. The researcher found that the students were very interested and motivated to do their job. Luckily, they got a phone or laptop to do their job. One problem that occurred was only the internet connection. Finally, after they finished their job, the researcher gave feedback in the comment section below their writing project. Their problem; such as punctuation and organization were slightly got fixed. Their work was very orderly and more attractive. They added some pictures and modify their words (change the color, shape, etc.) The researchers assumed that they enjoyed using it and make them feel free to modify everything on their own project.

In the treatment process, the students were so natural in blogging activity. Some of them attached some pictures and modified the words as their own. Almost all of them got a high score in the term of punctuation. All criterions on the descriptive text were fixed in the post-test activities. The teacher give feedback to their writng. Here are the examples of feedback for the students writings in their blog.

- "Great writing. My comment, you need to be careful about have and has, and your punctuation is not that good. Learn more about punctuation."
- "Very good writing, but you need to watch of the language features of descriptive text. It should use present tenses. Your punctuation is very good, though. Keep it up!"

The final activity was post-test. This activity meant to know ability after the students got the treatment. The day before the post-test was held, the researchers commanded them to bring their smartphone or laptop to help them in blogging activity. Post-test was conducted on 24th March 2017. The researcher asked them to make a descriptive about thing in the class directly in their blog individually. Every student should use the blog their group had, so technically one blog was used for 6-7 students. All students were ready whether with their smartphone or laptop. If there were some students who did not have an internet connection, there were friends who turned on the Wi-Fi connection, they were sharing connection each other.

There are some drawbacks during the implementation of blogging class. The first one is internet connection. This is the most important thing for doing blogging class, if there is no internet, there is no blog. Luckily, all the students on this class are very cooperative. They shared the internet connection via internet hotspot on their mobile phone. Thus, the class activity was going smoothly. Secondly, it needed much time to conduct the blogging class as the introduction section. There were some points or details that the students were exposed to focus on. Thus, the careful time management in lesson plan construction was considered significant.

Despite the obstacles found during the process, the output of the learning show positive result. (Djuaraskovic & Hines, 2016) states that Blog will make the students to be a better writer and thinker; with blogging activity, by making great pieces of content and creating a good and creative writing content, by the time goes by, their writing, thinking and research skills will improve in the process. It can be said that the students need to be consistent with the blogging activity, they need to post it every day or every week. Then, it would be the effective way to improve their writing skill.

Furthermore, the researcher wanted the students to give the feedback each other, correcting the grammatical, punctuation, etc. (Morris, 2013) states that blog will provide self-improvement through commenting. The comment feature is important, students can ask question, give reply related through their work. Aziz (2015) also states that commenting activity would make both the teacher and students to revise the students' writing and make writing more

enjoyable. In line with this, Huang, Huang, Wu, Chen, & Chang (2016) state that blog can be modified with problem based learning so that it can help students' learning, especially those with low achievement.

Morris (2013) agrees that blog has many benefits in teaching learning process, he mentions that blog is a fascinating starting point for introducing technology into the classroom. Blog provides more features that help students to show their creativity and imagination, then they could pour them on the blog and post it online. Djuaraskovic & Hines (2016) also states that blog will make the students to be a better writer and thinker; with Blogging activity, by making great pieces of content and creating a good and creative writing content, by the time goes by, your writing, thinking and research skills will improve in the process. Blogging activity needs a lot of time, by training and learning to write an idea, writing project or article in blog for time to time, it would make the students to be a better writer.

4 CONCLUSION

The researchers conclude that blog is potentially used as supporting media in assiting students to develop writing skill, particularly in the topic of describing something. This study also would like to promote that blog has a lot of benefits for language learners. First, blog is easy to use with intensive teachers' guide. Second, writing becomes easier to access with application in the students' portable gadgets. There are plenty of features that make students more creative, and they could decorate the words directly through the blog and change the theme into more eye-catching performance in order to catch the viewers' attention so that it has more visits and comments for the appreciation or feedback for improvement. Third, blog brings the students into new kind of situation that makes them interested and motivated in learning English writing. Finally, based on the the result of this study, blog is one alternative social media that can be used as the reference for future researchers to conduct more investigation on blog as online media in teaching and learning and its more effective use collaborated with different writing approaches or techniques.

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