The Use of Weblog in Improving Students’ Writing Skill

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Abstract

This research is aimed at finding out whether the use of weblog improves students’ writing skill at SMPN 9 Banda Aceh or not. The sample of this research was the second grade students in the class of VII-1. The researcher used pre-experimental research with one group pre-test post-test design in analyzing the significant improvement. The data were gained quantitatively by administering pre-test and post-test. In analyzing the data, the researcher used statistical formula mean score and t-test. The finding shows that the mean score in the post-test was higher than in pretest. It shows that the mean score of posttest is higher (75) than the pretest score (57), so the different scores of the tests is 18. Moreover, the analysis of t-test showed that \( t_{\text{score}} > t_{\text{table}} \) or \( 8.714 > 2.074 \) at the level of significance 0.05 with the degree of freedom (df) 22. The higher aspects were content and vocabulary (16 Point). Based on these results, it can be concluded that \( H_a \) is accepted and \( H_0 \) is rejected. It suggests that the use of weblog can improve students’ writing skills in all aspects. Therefore, the Weblog is recommended as a good media in teaching writing.

Key words: Weblog, Writing Skills, Organization, Content, Vocabulary, Grammar, Mechanics.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is used as a media for communication and as the first international language to interact with others around the world. Millions of people use English in many aspects of social life, technology, and business. There are four aspects that need to be mastered by an English learner: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Due to the advance of technology, writing is one of the important skills that must be mastered by the students in English language learning process. Richards (1990) as cited in Agustina (2014, p. 1) states that writing competence is very essential for academic success. In writing, students need well knowledge and hard thinking when they produce words, sentences and paragraphs with a good grammar. Junior high school students are expected to achieve 70 scores for the Competence of
The Use of Weblog in Improving Students' Writing Skill by Muhammad Fahreza, Zulfadli A. Aziz and Nurul Inayah

Standard Minimum (KKM) in English subject. In writing, the junior high school students are expected to master the structure of the text, social function, and language features.

Based on the result of preliminary study that the researcher conducted when he was taking Internship in SMPN 9 Banda Aceh on February to May, year 2016 he found some problems faced by students. When students were writing English, they were difficult to express their ideas. They did not even understand the terms ‘content’ or ‘main idea’ of texts. They had many things in mind to tell, but they felt confused how write it down. Students’ lack of vocabulary had become a problem to their writing. They tended to repeat the same words several times, and the word choice sometimes was inappropriate with the context they wrote.

To resolve those problems, teachers are challenged to be more creative in teaching. One of the options is the use online media. Weblog is one of the online media that can be used to teach writing.

Galien and Bowcher (2010) state that weblog is a new tool used for written communication, interaction and available in multiple languages. Weblogs is one of the applications of computer network technology that has been used besides email, electronic journals, web, multimedia, audio, and chatting. According to As’ad (2010, p. 75) weblog is a combination from Web and Log, or now more popular is called a blog or blogging. The term blog means the writing activities in an internet application where the outcome of these writings can be accessed by anyone who has an internet connection and the owner of his/her own blog. Weblog is a web that provides a feature to write and also provide space to exchange comments and peer-correction in the form of grammatical errors. They can give an opinion on his/her friends writing. The teacher can also use a weblog to provide feedback to students so that they can improve their writing. Weblog can help the students improve their writing skills better than before they use it.

Based on that case, the researcher has formulated the research question as follow: “Is there any significant improvement on students’ writing skill after teaching by using weblog at SMPN 9 Banda Aceh?”.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Definition of Writing
Writing is the act of pouring an idea into written form or telling something to the readers through written language. Through writing we can communicate indirectly. According to Wyrick (2011) writing is a productive skill, and it is a creative act in expressing ideas, and writing also can help the students to explore their thoughts and feelings. It means that writing is a production of language by using words or sentences on a paper. Nunan (2003, p. 88) states that writing is a process of thinking to get ideas and express those ideas in the form of sentences and paragraphs. Moreover, Creme and Lea (2003, p.5) states that writing consists of words and those words are combined in particular formations to make sentences. Then, the sentences are grouped together into paragraphs.

2.2 Aspects of Writing
Brown and Bailey (2004, p.244) classifies the aspect of writing into five categories. The first is Content. Content refers to the essence of writing, the experience of main idea. It is identified by seeing the topic sentence. The topic
sentence should reflect the entire of the paragraph and express the main idea. Second is vocabulary skill. Vocabulary refers to the words or selection those are suitable with the content. It can be classified by seeing the words choice or diction to convey ideas to the reader. Third is grammar skill. Grammar refers to the use of syntactical pattern and the correct grammatical forms. It is identified from the construction of well-formed sentence. Forth is organization skill. It is referred to the ideas that stick together so that ideas run smoothly within the paragraph. The last is mechanics. Mechanics of writing are critical parts of learning to write.

2.3 Kind of Text in Writing

Studying writing is not about how to write well or the theory, but in learning writing the students also need to know the genres of text. There are five texts that should be learned by students in Junior High School such as procedure text, descriptive text, report text, narrative text, and recount text.

2.4 Definition of Weblog

Weblog is used as a media to share stories, events, or other materials such as graphics or video. Blog is a type of web page that is simple to create and to disseminate and that is used as a form of online journal. Meanwhile, Mynard (2007) says that weblog is a kind of daily activities online that has been reported to be very useful for the media to improve students' English learning. Richardson (2009) also said that the early adopters of weblog in the classrooms have already created a wide variety of ways to use them, and they have shown that weblog can enhance and deepen learning.

2.5 Type of Weblog

There are three types of weblog that are used in language classes: (1) Tutor blog. The tutor blog is run by a teacher. The contents of this blog can be any type such as syllabus, homework, tasks, notes or just course information. In this type, the teacher can choose to write about his or her life, sharing information about the culture, the goal for students can stimulate online and in classroom discussion. In this type of blog, students usually restricted to be able to write a comment to teacher's post. (2) Class Blog. Campbell (2003) said that the class blog is a shared space, both teachers and students can write to the main area. This class blog usually used as a collaborative discussion between students and students or between students and teachers. Here, the students can be encouraged to reflect more deeply, in writing, on themes touched upon in class. Different from the tutor blog, class blog gave the student a greater sense of freedom and involvement without having to be limited. (3) Learner blog. This type of blog gives each student a personal blog. The advantage of learner blog are the students have their own personal online space to write whatever they want, it is useful to enhance the students' creativity. The students posted stories on weblog and other students can give feedback or comment on the activities of students.

2.6 The Advantages of Weblog

The use of weblog in the teaching and learning process has the advantages. Dieu (2004) and Mitchell (2003) states that teachers can easily use a weblog to control the collaborative learning process in which students can peer edit others’
student postings. Students should be encouraged to comment their partner’s postings, which can also be shared by other classmates.

By using weblog during the learning process and expecting students to participate, weblog can increase engagement and literacy skills. Weblog aims to provide students to write, which in turn encourages the students to produce higher quality work. Weblog is also a perfect tool for teaching grammar, language conventions, and spelling.

2.7 The Disadvantages of Weblog

The use of weblog in the teaching and learning process also has the disadvantages. Students can be easily distracted when they can connect to the weblog, because they have access to the virtual world, and the students can forget the task that they are doing. Not all the skills in the language can be applied weblog. Because, learning English using weblog is only conducted in writing skill. It will lack of listening and speaking skill training. Writing may be more casual than traditional assignment.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Method

This study applied pre-experimental study with one group pre-test and post-test. In this case, one group pre-test post-test design applied because the two tests are administrated to the same group.

3.2 Population and sample

The population in this research is the second grade students of SMPN 9 Banda Aceh. There are four classes in this grade, which consist of 248 students. As a sample, the researcher only took one class. The sample was randomly selected by using lottery, and Class VIII-1 with 23 students was chosen. This class consists of 14 female students and 9 male students.

3.3 Research Instrument

To collect the data, the researcher used a set of written test (pre-test and post-test) as instruments. The written test is used to measure the students’ ability in writing. The students were asked to write a recount paragraph about “my holiday” for pre-test and “memorable day” for post-test which consists of 70 words.

3.4 Technique of Data Collection

The whole of this research was conducted in five meetings. For pre-test, the students were asked to write a recount text with the topic “My holiday” which consists of 70 words. The time given for this test was thirty minutes. After giving the pre-test and analyzing students’ score, the researcher conducted experimental teaching for the class by using weblog.

The treatment was conducted by the researcher in three meetings. He implemented the use of weblog to teach English writing, especially recount text. In the beginning of the lesson, the class had a little discussion about recount texts. This was followed by a brainstorming about examples of recount text. Further, the students were to be familiarized with the use of weblog by opening the sample weblog. The students then were guided to make their own blogs in order to be a medium to post their works. After that, students posted the story in the blog and
the researcher gives feedback on students’ writing. The students also gave feedback to their friends’ work. Through the comment, researcher asked the students to revise the draft and develop it into a good text. They were asked to finalize their work based on his/her friends and teacher feedback.

Finally, at the last meeting, the researcher administers the post-test to the students to find out whether there is such improvement on their writing ability after using weblog. For the post-test, they were asked to write a recount text with the topic “Memorable day” which consists of 70 words. The duration is about thirty minutes.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Result

In this chapter, the researcher presented the result and discussion of the study. This research was conducted at SMPN 9 Banda Aceh in order to know whether there is any significant improvement on students’ writing skill after being taught by using weblog or not. The data for this research was gathered within three weeks, starting from March 30th and finishing on April 13th 2017. The sample of this research was class VIII-1 which consists of 23 students (14 males and 9 females).

4.1.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data of the pretest and posttest were scored by using analytic rubric Brown (2004). After analyzing the data, the researcher used t-test formula as suggested by Arikunto (2006, p. 500-511). After the result was obtained, the researcher presents the data in three tables. The first table showed the pretest scores, the second table showed the posttest scores, and the last table showed the comparison between pretest and posttest scores.

The pretest was conducted on the first meeting before the treatments were given. In the pretest, the students’ were asked to write a recount text about “My Holiday”. Their text must be in 70 words. The time for the students to complete the pretest was thirty minutes. The result of data can be seen in the table below.

The posttest was held after the treatments were applied in order to know if there any significant improvement on students’ writing skill after teaching by using weblog. In the posttest, there was a question that the students were asked to develop it into a short recount text. The question was “Write a short recount text
about memorable day in 70 words”. In this posttest, the students were given thirty minutes to accomplish the task. The result of data can be seen in the table below.

### 4.2 The Result of Post-test

Mean was very important part to measure the students’ pre-test and post test score. There are five aspects in writing that need to be mastered such as organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic. To make it clear, the comparison of writing aspects scores can be seen in the next figure below.

### 4.3 The Improvement of Students’ Score in Writing Aspects

#### 4.1.2 Hypothesis Testing

The researcher applied two hypotheses namely alternative hypothesis (\(H_a\)) and null hypothesis (\(H_0\)) in order to know the differences of the pre-test and post-test scores. \(H_a\) shown there was a significant difference between the two scores after the treatment applied while \(H_0\) shown that there was no significant difference between the two scores. In order to test the hypotheses, the researcher used t-test formula. In addition, t-test was a primary statistic used to establish whether both pre-test and post-test scores have significant difference or not. The hypothesis was tested by using t-test formula with the level of significant of 0.05 (5%).

In this research, the t-table with the level of significance of \(\alpha\) 0.05 with the degree of freedom (df) was 22 is 2.074. Furthermore, before the data are applied into t-test
formula in hypothesis testing, it has to find the mean score of the different score between pre-test and post-test. Finally, the researcher used t-test formula in order to know whether there is significant difference between the results of the students’ ability before using weblog in teaching writing.

From the result, the researcher found that the t-test of this research was higher than t-table. The result of t-test was 8.714 and the t-table was 2.074. It means that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted while the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. Afterward, based on the result above, it was shown that there was significant difference between pre-test and post-test. In other words, the use of weblog improves students’ writing competence especially in writing recount text.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the explanation above, the result of data analysis showed that the alternative hypothesis was accepted which meant that the use of weblog improves students’ writing competence especially in writing recount text. In conclusion, the mean score in pre-test was 57 meanwhile the mean of the post-test was 75. It showed that there was an improvement on the students’ score up to 18 points.

Furthermore, the use of weblog in improving students’ writing skill has increased student’s ability in content and vocabulary. It can be seen from the result of students score in content and vocabulary aspect was the higher in writing aspects (16 points).

During the treatment sessions given by the researcher, the students showed improvement in certain parts where they previously made mistakes after receiving feedback for their writing from their friends and also the researcher. For instance, the students wrote “he have” in the pre-test, but they wrote “he has” in the post-test. It means that the students were aware that they did some mistakes in grammar and also the words. After sharing their knowledge through weblog, they were able to fix their mistakes in their future writing. This situation was similar with evidence that was found by Kusumawardhani (2012) she found that the words and word frequency levels were improved. She used the weblog in teaching writing.

The students wrote and expressed more in weblog. The choice of words was also varied than the words students’ used in a conventional way. The students were helped to revise the draft not only based on the teacher’s suggestion, but also from other students’ comments.

In summary, the use weblog could improve students’ writing ability. Therefore, it can be stated that the use of the weblog media in teaching writing can be an alternative solution to overcome the students’ difficulties in generating ideas, using appropriate grammar, and cohesive devices. The researcher believes that the use of weblog in teaching writing not only helps students to get better academic result but also give chances for students to be involved in discussion, and critical in thinking.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the result of the research on the second grade of SMPN 9 Banda Aceh on March, 30th 2017 until April 13th, 2017, the researcher found that there was a significant difference on the scores gained from pre-test and post-test. It was proved by mean score of post-test is higher than the mean score of the pretest namely was 75 > 57. It can be seen that the difference score of both scores was 18 point. While the result of-test was 8.714, the critical value was 0.05 and degree of
freedom (df) = 2.074. So the t-table was higher than t-table (8.714 > 2.074). It means the main alternative hypothesis (Ha) of this research is accepted (There is a significant improvement on students’ writing recount text after using weblog), and main null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected (There is no a significant improvement on students' writing recount text after using weblog). Besides, the t-scores of writing aspects (organization, content, grammar, and vocabulary, and mechanics) were 4.911, 5.117, 7.637, 5.951, and 3.475. Those score are also higher than t-table (4.911, 5.117, 7.637, 5.951, and 3.475 > 2.074).

In teaching learning of writing, English teacher should be able to choose the most appropriate teaching media for the students. The teacher can use weblog as a media in teaching writing since this media has significant benefit for students. Therefore, English teachers are suggested to use weblog as media in the process of writing teaching learning. For future researchers, in order to gain a good result in using weblog as a media to improve the students’ ability in writing recount text, it is better to have enough time to conduct the research.

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