The Effectiveness of Using Blog in Teaching Writing Skill

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Abstract

The research was purposed to find out: (1) whether the use of the blog is effective in teaching writing skill; and (2) the significant level of using the blog in teaching writing skill. In term of investigating, the purposive sampling technique was used to select A-Morning class of the sixth-semester study of English Department of a private university in Pontianak to be the participant. The blog was used as a media to do drafting, revising and uploading the students' writing texts. In both pre-test and post-test, the data gathered shows that the critical-value is higher than the t-value (20.224> 2.145), meaning that using a blog is significant in teaching the students' writing skill. More, the significance level of the use of the blog is at a strong level since the value was higher than 1 (1.73) where most of the students could beneficially use the blog to improve their writing skills.

Keywords: *Writing, Blog, Effectiveness*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of teaching English at a university is that the learners are able to have adequate skill at four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. As the researcher did an observation prior to conducting the research, the researcher found out that the students must develop their writing skill significantly since having no adequate skill in order to be able to communicate ones' feeling or ideas in form of text properly. As stated by Berne (2009) writing is a form of communication that connects people, and this connection can endure beyond the writing group or the classroom. Accordingly, the need for communicating that even cuts across the geographical divisions are widely needed and it can be accomplished through the writing process. More, Ur (2009) states that writing has principal purposes, which it can be used to express ideas, convey a message to the reader, then the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important aspect of the writing. The written text conforms more to conventional rules of grammar, its vocabularies must be more precise and formal than any other activity. Finally, due to writing has five aspects, writing-process takes the writers to perform those five aspects comprehensively. Performing the aspects of writing is such a problem for the students. Eventually, students should have knowledge and understanding to make a comprehensible and the essential writing techniques depending on the topic and the required format.

Prior to conducting the research, the researcher found a theory of the use of the blog. As there are some studies related to using the blog as a media in teaching writing, which were conducted by (Chen 2012; Emrah Özdemira and Aydin 2015;

Hoseini 2014; Kuimova and Zvekov 2016). Coming from those relevant studies, the researcher determined to investigate the theory of the blog to the English Students of a private university in Pontianak to find out whether using the blog is effective in teaching writing for them. Since this era is changed to the Industry Revolution 4.0, internet utilizations/ digital tools that allow learners to access anything from the internet can be widely used without any time and place limitation. Blog, well-known as the digital tools that people can use to express any ideas, feelings, experience and others. All can be delivered in the form of an online journal where others can see and give any comments or critics. Receiving the comments and critics can help the writer to develop his/ her writing text that is uploaded on the blog registered. In conclusion, blogs constitute a constructivist way of learning. By reaching the information and making and the meaning in mind, learners develop a high level of thinking skill. In advance of helping the students to overcome grammatical errors, the researcher also used a grammatical-checking platform to help the students whilst the writing process so that they could use it as a help to avoid any typographical errors, punctuation errors, grammatical errors and so on.

This is a pre-experimental study, the researcher needed one class only. With one class being treated, the researcher used the blog as a media to do drafting, revising and uploading texts to the registered blog. In that case, the researcher taught the students both in an online and offline meeting (blended-learning activity). Finally, this research was conducted in the purpose of finding out the effectiveness of using a blog in teaching the students writing skill of the sixth English Students of a private university in Pontianak in the Academic Year of 2018/ 2019.

METHOD

The method that is used in this current research is quantitative research using a pre-experimental design. This kind of research has three characteristics, including (1) pre-test; (2) treatment; (3) post-test. The population of this research was the sixth-semester students in academic year 2018/2019. Since the researcher is an assistant of Mr. Aunurrahman (the thesis supervisor) and this research is also part of his research, purposive sampling was used to get the sample chosen. The researcher chose one of his class where he taught Business-Correspondence Letter. In the end, the sample selected was class A-Morning. The sample consisted of 2 males and 13 females.

In collecting the data, the writing test was the instrument that the researcher used. Prior to giving the test to the students, there was a try out to check the readability of the writing instruction to the non-sample class, and validity of the writing test. There are five aspects need to be performed by the writer, they are content; organization; vocabulary; language use; and mechanics (Brown 1994). Avoiding bias and errors of the research, the researcher played role as the teacher/ guide of the students. Thus, the writing test was used to obtain the information of the students writing skill level before and after being treated in four criteria as adapted from (Heaton 1998): excellent to very good performance; good to average performance; fair to poor performance and very poor performance. To analyze the data gathered, the researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

As a result of conducting this research, this shows the findings and discussion of the research. The findings are shown in two kinds of statistic calculation; descriptive and inferential statistics. The data gathered from the writing test which was administered both in pre-test and post-test. The frequency of distribution includes mean, range, minimal score, maximal score, and standard deviation. The data description is divided into 7 points. The result of the frequency distribution can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of Pre-test and Post-test

No.	Session	Mean	Range	Min score	Max score	Sum	Std. Dev.
1	Pre-test	53.4	35	40	75	801	7.16
2	Post-test	86.2	29	69	98	1293	7

Since writing has five aspects, the researcher analyzed the result of the test based on their performance on the five aspects of writing itself. The following is the result of the Pre-test where the five aspects of writing were performed as shown in the table below:

Table 2. The Result of Pre-test

No	Initial Name	Aspects					Score
		Content	Organization	Vocabulary	Language Use	Mechanics	
1	AS	23	15	15	18	4	75
2	AR	17	10	10	11	3	51
3	BET	17	11	11	12	4	55
4	DR	18	11	10	11	3	53
5	DL	18	14	10	11	3	56
6	DA	17	10	12	13	3	55
7	EFP	18	11	14	11	3	57
8	EK	18	11	10	11	3	53
9	FH	17	10	10	11	3	51

10	IW	18	11	10	11	3	53
11	LS	17	10	10	11	3	51
12	MPC	17	10	10	11	3	51
13	MH	17	10	10	11	2	50
14	T	17	10	10	11	2	50
15	UMF	15	7	10	6	2	40
Mean Score		17,6	10,73	10,8	11,3	2,93	53,4

(note: maximum score is 100)

Referring to Table 2 above, there was one student whose score was far above others; 75. She was the only one who could perform the writing aspects above 70 where it was categorized as 'good to average' level of writing skill. That statistic means that she had a good knowledge of the subject, was able to organize the letter where the main ideas could stand out, did occasional errors of choosing words or idiom but the meaning was clear enough to be understood, and also had a good paragraphing, punctuating, spelling, and capitalizing even though some errors happened the meaning was not obscured. Consequently, with the five aspects of writing were performed well enough, she achieved the highest score among others. Meanwhile, the 14 other students' score was under 60 which was categorized as 'fair to poor' level of writing skill. Averagely, they had limited knowledge of the subject and somehow gave unimportant content, were not able to stand the main ideas out clearly, did frequently errors of choosing the words or idioms, got problem with the use of articles, prepositions, then the meaning obscured, and did frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalizations. For last but not least, one student whose score was 40 performed a poor performance of writing. As the five aspects scored, she could not create the content with adequate knowledge, did frequent errors of words and idioms, obscured the meaning of the words. More, the language she used in the text was not enough to evaluate where she did many errors that confused the meaning and was not able to organize the text. Finally, as described above, most of the students could not achieve at least good score in writing where 14 of the participants scored under 60. Also, as the matter of fact that there was one student who scored under 50 which was categorized as poor performance, indicates that there should be given a special treatment to one or some students which could be given in the treatment stage later. In the end, regardless most of the students performed writing aspects badly, there was one student who could perform far better among others, consequently, the range between the highest and the lowest score was 35.

After gaining the pre-test data earlier, the treatment could be run in the purpose of investigating the theory of using a blog in teaching writing skill. The treatment had been being conducted in five meetings where finally the researcher gave the post-test in the sixth meeting. The researcher ordered the students to upload their final work on the blog they had previously registered in the second

meeting. Once they uploaded, the researcher could do scoring to theirs. The data gathered as the following:

Table 3. The Result of Post-Test

No	Initial Name	Content	Organization	Vocabulary	Language Use	Mechanics	Total
				Aspects			
1	AS	30	20	20	23	5	98
2	AR	26	16	15	20	4	81
3	BET	26	15	16	20	5	82
4	DR	28	18	17	23	5	91
5	DL	28	17	17	20	5	87
6	DA	28	16	16	20	5	85
7	EFP	27	19	17	21	5	89
8	EK	28	19	17	21	5	90
9	FH	28	19	17	20	5	89
10	IW	28	19	17	20	5	89
11	LS	28	20	18	22	5	93
12	MPC	27	19	17	21	5	89
13	MH	27	17	16	20	4	84
14	T	22	14	13	16	4	69
15	UMF	25	15	14	19	4	77
	Mean score	27,07	17,53	16,47	20,4	4,73	86,2

(note: maximum score is 100)

As the table above shows the data gathered from the post-test, there are some differences compared to the result of the pre-test. Table 3 above shows the final result of the students where it can be seen that most of the students performed better than before. There were four students who could score equal to or higher than 90 which was categorized as 'very good' writing skill. Meaning that those four students have a very good skill to create the content where they could give important information, and showed that they have a better skill in creating the

content to be more knowledgeable and understandable for the readers. More, after experienced the treatment in a couple of meetings, they could create a well-organized text where the main idea was clearly stated, and the text was well-sequenced. In term of creating a formal text, they could choose the suitable words and managed it in an appropriate register. They used the language effectively where they did almost no errors of agreement, tenses, number, word order, function, preposition, and pronouns. Therefore, the text that they created was very good which they could demonstrate mastery of conventions, did few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. Finally, these all could improve their writing score where they could score far better than they did in the pre-test.

Meanwhile, nine students scored higher than 80. Comparing their results to the pre-test, it can be determined that the nine students here scored far better than they did in the pre-test. It can be seen on the table above where their score put them on the level as 'good' writing skill. For that reason, it indicates that they have adequate knowledge to create the content of the text, or can be argued that after having a treatment in a couple of meeting, they could have an adequate range in creating the business letter. The ability to organize the letter also increased, where they could organize the text almost logically sequencing, made the main ideas stand out. That is an improvement they achieved and it was significantly different from the pre-test'. Realizing that they would make a writing text that they should use formal language and suitable words, the students' ability in using the language and vocabulary improved as well as the two aspects described earlier. They could use the words correctly and almost no errors happened. Dealing with the kind of the text, they could use an effective but simple construction of the language, did few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns, and preposition. They also could show a significant improvement in paragraphing, spelling, punctuating, and capitalizing.

The data gathered shows that the students could perform far better than before. Most of the students experienced an improvement in their writing skill during the period of the research activity. However, it is important to take note that there were still two students whose scores deviated far enough from the mean score of the students. Actually, the two students whose initial name T and UMF were the same students whose performances were the two lowest in the pre-test, and they got the same 'status' in the post-test. In the post-test, they scored 69 and 77 respectively. Means that their level was categorized as 'good to average' level but it tends to be categorized as 'average' level of writing skill. It can be argued from the result where even if they did a better performance in the content, organization, and mechanic aspects, they were not able to execute significant improvement in vocabulary and language use aspects. Frequent errors of words occurred, and they had limited range to build a good sentence on the letter. It can be seen that 'UMF' could perform one point better than 'T', but it was not enough to demonstrate that 'UMF' had a good ability in vocabulary aspects. Also, 'T' accomplished some errors of negation, tense and word orders that impact his Language Use aspect. Finally, even they scored better on the three aspects of writing, but still, it could not impact their writing skill significantly as the lecturer expected since their Vocabulary and Language Use aspects were low. Winding up the facts, there should be a special treatment to some

students who scored far lower than others which indicates that they could not achieve the target scores
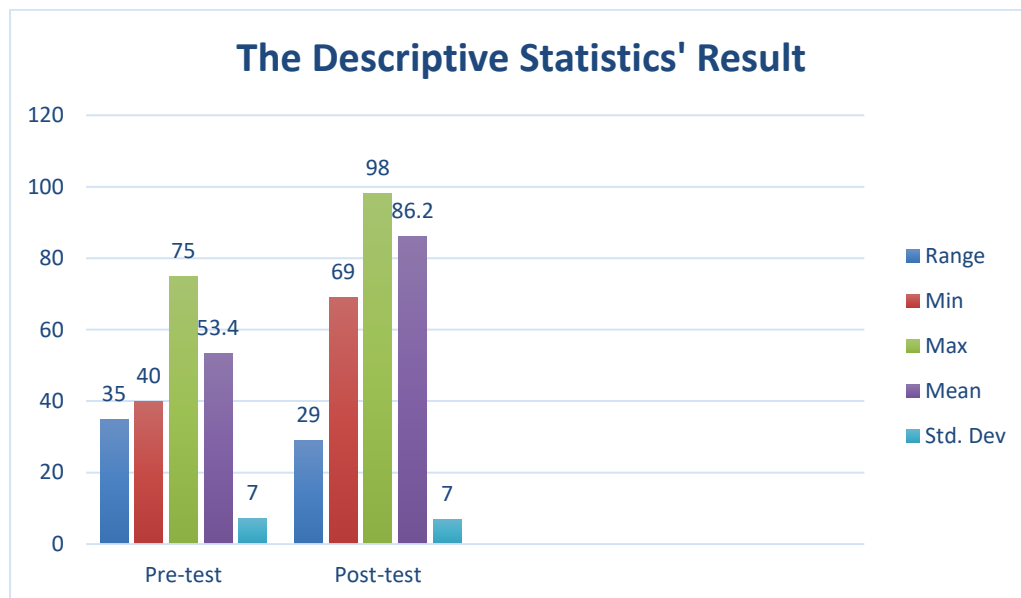

Figure 1. The Comparison of The Pre-test and Post-test

The graphic above shows the comparison between the two tests according to descriptive analysis. Based on the graphic, the final result of the students is higher in four frequency distributions; mean score, range, min score, max score, and the standard deviation. Then, based on the normality test by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the data are in normal distribution since the $L_o > \alpha$ (0,05).

Table 4. The result of Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
		Pre-test	Post-test
N		15	15
Normal Parameters[a]	Mean	53.4	86.2
	Std. Deviation	7.16	7
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.251	.189
	Positive	.241	.113

Negative	-.251	-.189
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.971	.731
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.302	.659

a. Test distribution is Normal.

As seen in Table 4 above, the critical value of pre-test and post-test were 0.302 and 0.659 respectively. Accordingly, the data distribution of either pre-test or post-test were normal due to the critical values were higher than α (0,05). To take a generalization whether the use of the blog is effective in teaching the students' writing skill, the inferential is needed, so t-test was applied. The following is the result of t-test.

Table 5. T-Test Analysis

		Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre Test - Post Test	-3.28000E1	6.28149	1.62187	-36.27857	-29.32143	-20.224	14	.000

Paired Samples Test

Accordingly, the Critical value of the data is 20.224. Meanwhile, the degree of freedom is 14. As seen on the t-table, with the 2-tailed significant level α (0.05), the 14th column shows that the T-value is 2.145 which is lower than the Critical value of the data gathered. It indicates that the T-value is acceptable to reject the Null Hypothesis at the level of significance α (0.05), and also differ significantly. Thus, the Alternative Hypothesis is accepted since the significance value of the data is 0.000, which is lower than α (0.05). So, there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test in term of writing skill in writing a business letter.

For last but not least, to know the level of significance of the research, the researcher calculated the effect size of the treatment given. Here is the result:

$$\mathbf{ES} = \frac{\mathbf{86.2 - 53.4}}{\mathbf{7 + 7.16}}$$

$$\mathbf{S} = \frac{\mathbf{32.8}}{\mathbf{14.16}}$$

$$\mathbf{S = 2.31}$$

As the result calculated, the value of the effect size is 2.31 which means it is higher than 1. Based on the qualification of Effect Size, if the result is > 1, then the effect size of the treatment is strongly affect the writing skill.

Discussion

As previously mentioned earlier in chapter II that writing is a never one-step process, then the writer should go up and down to check and revise their text. So, the researcher ordered the students to revise their works more than once in order to create a comprehensive writing text where the five aspects of writing could be accomplished well in the text. As emphasized by Ur (2009) writing has principal purposes, which it can be used to express ideas, convey a message to the reader, then the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important aspect of the writing. Principal purposes of writing are communication in the form of written text, so the writer must be able to deliver their thoughts in the text with a communicative language or vocabulary. Consequently, as the pre-test' result gathered, the researcher gave treatment to the students in such a way in order to take as many as possible advantages of the tools that the researcher utilized for teaching. Finally, besides using the blog as the main media to teach the students' writing skill, the researcher utilized a grammar-checking platform in order to help the students in the writing process where they had to be able to accomplish the five aspects well. As a result, it could enhance the students' ability in vocabulary, language use, and mechanic aspects. Agreeing with it, it can be argued from the result of the post-test in table 4. 7 where most of the students could improve the three aspects mentioned above with significant differences compared to their pre-test' result.

Basically, writing has five aspects Brown (1994); Harmer (2004): content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, the students must have been able to perform those five aspects well. Consequently, the researcher tried to encourage the students' ability by applying a new approach adapted from the experts, it was Reading to Learn approach (Richardson et al., 2006; Rose, 2005). Putting it simply, the researcher combined three new 'things', using the blog as the media to teach while utilizing another platform to help the students in the writing process to avoid errors of vocabulary, mechanics and language use, and applying a

Reading to Learn approach to combine those two tools in a blended-learning activity. Thus, as described in the first paragraph above, the grammar-checking platform could significantly help the students in the writing process where most of them did almost no errors in vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. More, applying the new approach adopted, the researcher found out that it effectively encouraged the students to revise and re-think their text prior to uploading to the blog registered. The way how this approach worked could be seen on the procedure of the research in chapter III page 47. The procedure that encouraged the students to revise and revise until they were sure to carry over the text to be uploaded. The most important is the use of the blog itself. Realizing the function of the blog that had been demonstrated in the first meeting, the students tend to be more motivated to give the best text they could create in order to be published. At the end, supported by the approach and the grammar-checking platform, the function of the blog could be maximally gained and gave a significant effect on the students writing skill. To simply say that, the blog affected the general issue that the students were much encouraged to improve their writing skill, while the grammar-checking platform and the application of the approach affected the technical issue where the students could be much helped even though they might not realize this.

To conduct this research, the researcher came with the purpose of investigating a theory of the use of the blog, while supported by some previous researches (Chen, 2012; Emrah Özdemira & Aydin, 2015; Kuimova & Zvekov, 2016; Madini, 2018). These previous studies have proven that the use of the blog is effective to teach students' writing skill. Applying an e-learning concept with a process-based approach, they prove that blog can enhance the students writing skill since it gives a significant impact. Instead of applying the same way as they did, the current researcher applied a genre-based approach (Reading to Learn) and another platform to help in the blended-learning concept conducted in the research activity. Speaking specifically, when the previous researchers Chen (2012; Özdemir & Ayd (2015) found out that process-based learning could help the students to improve the five aspects of writing. Contrarily, comparing the result of the research to the paper-pen traditional learning that using the blog is not superior regarding writing achievement. Also, due to the students were not accustomed to digital tools, the technical issues affected the students in the writing process. In the end, they report that the blog has no positive effect to the sentence construction. Consequently, to avoid the technical issues that might be distracting for the students, the current researcher adapted a new approach that has been implemented in a blended-learning concept so that the researcher could effectively pay attention to the students. More, since blended-learning concept applied, the students did not found technical issues that obstructed them to create a good writing text due to they did not have to use the blog all the time but in the end of the teaching-learning activity when they needed to upload their final works. Furthermore, to avoid some issues related to vocabulary, language use, mechanics, and grammar, the researcher utilized a grammar-checkng platform which in the end could positively impact those aspects that the students performed much better in the post-test.

Alternatively, using a blog to teach the students writing skill is effective. It can be proven from the final result of the test wherein the previous sub-chapter, the

post-test' result is higher than the pre-test' result which was considered as the first real situation of the students. Since the pre-test had been administered, the real situation was found that the mean score, the range, the maximum and the minimum score of the students were inferior to the final result which had been got from the post-test. Specifically, utilizing the blog with the technical supports from Reading to Learn the approach and Grammar-checking platform is significantly effective to teach the students writing skill.

Finally, the whole data has gathered and shown that the objectives of the research are found out. Figure 1. 14 shows that the implementation of the blog as the media for teaching writing is effective. Since the significant level of the data was 0.000 which is lower the α (0.005), it also confirms that the Alternative Hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Meanwhile, the second objective of the research is also confirmed that the extent of the blog in teaching writing is in a strong level of effectiveness since the value was greater than one (2.31 > 1).

CONCLUSION

As the research findings gathered, which are explained in sub 'discussion', the researcher sums up that, teaching writing skill to the students is effective by using a blog. It gives many advantages such as: stimulating the students' critical thinking; providing the students to Model to Learn; affecting the students' writing quality significantly; facilitating meaningful learning to the students. It can be seen that the students' final result after using a blog to help them writing in a couple of meeting was significantly different from the previous result from the pre-test. However, to give a maximum effect there should a long time to teach the students since there are some of them who could not follow the instructions, as well as others.

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