

IMPROVING READING SKILL OF STUDENTS OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY CONCENTRATION PROGRAM OF SRIWIJAYA STATE POLYTECHNIC THROUGH WEBLOG

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Abstract: This study investigated the improvement in reading skill through weblog. It was aimed at finding out whether or not there is a significant difference in reading achievements between the students who have treatment and that of those who have not, and how much weblog contributes in improving students' reading achievements. Forty out of 99 second semester students in the academic year 2011/2012 of Hospitality Industry Concentration Program of English Department Sriwijaya State Polytechnic were selected as the samples based on the criteria: (1) their average score of their reading between 66 – 85, (2) their TOEIC score was between 255 – 500, and (3) they were taught by the same lecturer. They were divided into two groups that consisted of 20 students for experimental group and 20 students for control group. All samples were given reading test taken from TOEIC test. T-test and regression analysis were used in analyzing the data. The results showed that the students who had treatment achieved higher and better scores in their reading compared to the students who had not. This study found out that weblog gives much contribution in improving the students' reading achievements.

Keywords: Reading, Weblog

INTRODUCTION

The social networking has offered the teaching and learning process that can be done at any time and any places. Duffy and Bruns (2006:31) state that the rapid development of digital technologies and their use in education enable individuals to interact within the educational domain in new ecologies of learning. Moreover, Nutt (2010) states that the World Wide Web has opened a whole new world of opportunity to those who need or want to learn English. Students can learn and have more information about English from the comfort of their own homes on the computers or laptops/notebooks. They can access them not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom as long as there is a hotspot or they have their own modem as the media to connect to internet.

Weblog is a social net-working adaptive technology. This net-workings can involve students in situations that require them to employ a growing assortment of cognitive skills in order to perform and solve the problems in these digital environments.

Reading as one of the language skills is very important to be learned by EFL students. Reading is a very good way for students to improve their language learning. They will get much information that is related with their need. According to Zimmerman (2011:1), "Reading skill refers to the ability to understand what has been read". Reading skill will enable the readers or the students to write. This means that the students should try to make sense of what they read and how they remember it.

Weblog or blog is like personal journals or diaries that provide an online venue where self expression and creativity are encouraged and online communities are built, weblog provides excellent opportunity for education to advance literacy through storytelling and dialogues (Huffaker, 2004:1).

According to Dudarey and Hoekly (2007:87), the most common type of blog is kept by one person, who will regularly post comments, thoughts, analyses, experiences of daily life, interesting links, jokes or any other form of content, to a web page. Other features of blog include instant publishing of text or graphics to the web without sophisticated technical

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knowledge, ways for people to provide comments or feedback to each blog spot, the opportunity to archive past blog posts by date and hyperlinks to other bloggers.

Reading in English is very important for Polytechnic students to increase their academic competence and also their English competence to compete with other job-seekers. Polytechnic puts the English as one of the subjects that should be learned by the students in Polytechnic curriculum. Every student learns English subject at least three semesters such as in the program of Computer Engineering, Telecommunication Engineering and Chemical Engineering. At Accounting Department, the students learn English four semesters, then at Mechanical Engineering, the students learn it for five semesters, and the other five departments, their students learn English for six semesters.

Reading is the process to comprehend the written text. According to Zimmerman (2011:1), "Reading skill refers to the ability to understand what has been read". The reading skill will enable the readers or the students to turn writing into meaning and achieve the goal of independence, comprehension, and fluency. This means that the students try to make sense of what they read and how they remember it. Because of this, reading needs a lot of practice.

Based on the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary in Wilhelm (2012:1) "comprehension is 'capacity of the mind to perceive and understand". Reading comprehension means the capacity to perceive and understand the meaning communicated by texts. Comprehension needs an active reader to construct the meaning from the texts.

Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004:16) state that "As you read, you make connections between what you are reading and what you already know". Reading deals with text. Text is a body of language that could consist of a single word like 'ladies' or 'gentlemen' on the toilet door right up to a complete book and can be either written or spoken. So reading text refers to the written text that is the text that can be read by the reader as the sources to get information.

Reading text is as an expository text. Lewis and Clark (2012:1) state that "the main purpose of expository text is to inform or describe". The information is organized in a logical and interesting manner using various expository text structures. There are some most common expository text structures, namely, description, enumerative or listing, sequence, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution. Expository text is nonfiction reading material that intends to inform or explain something to the reading audience.

Technology has reached the teaching and learning activities. Technology has offered a new type of literacy as digital fluency to consider. It refers to the way people become comfortable using technology as they would any other natural language (Huffaker, 2004:3). He, then, states that blogs represent a perfect medium for literacy. Authors must read and write as they would be on paper; while increasing their comfort with computers and the internet.

Weblog is an excellent way to fuse educational technology and literacy inside the classroom. Weblogs can be both individual and collaborative because they promote self-expression, a place where the writer/author develops highly personalized content. In the classroom, students can have personal space to read and write alongside a communal area where ideas are shared, questions are asked and answered, and social cohesion are developed.

Weblogs are very important for reading through information technology. The writer/teacher can post the reading text followed by some questions about it to encourage the students to comprehend the text. Then, the students post their answers, it is suggested for the other students to give comments or responds to their friends'.

Weblog is reflecting the views of the blog's creator and it consists of text and images and are sorted by date. According to Huffaker (2004:1), "Weblogs are personal journals or diaries and provide an online venue where self-expression and creativity is encouraged and

online communities are built, provide an excellent opportunity for education to advance literacy through storytelling and dialogues". The weblog enables the people to post their daily entries about their personal experiences and hobbies.

Sriwijaya State Polytechnic data show that the students' competence in reading is still disappointed and under the target (Polytechnic, 2011). The students' results are not satisfactory. They are under Polytechnic target. Polytechnic hopes that the students are in intermediate level that means their scores are around 405 – 600. Based on the results of TOEIC test for students of the Academic years 2008/2009 that was conducted in July 2011, their average test score was around 255 – 400. This means they are in Elementary level. For reading skill, they just understand the simple instruction and for the writing skill, they can just write short notes.

The TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) test is an English language proficiency test for non-native English speakers (Trew, 2011:4). It measures the everyday listening and reading skills of people working in an international workplace environments. The score of this test, in the range between 10 – 990, implies about the person's skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It describes how well people can communicate in English with others in business, commerce, and industry and this test does not require special knowledge or vocabulary that of a person who uses English in everyday work activities.

In December 2011, there was another TOEIC test conducted in Polytechnic for students of the Academic years 2011/2012 and the results were not so different from before. They are still in Elementary level. Here is the table of their results.

No	Month	Kinds of Test	Results		
			The lowest	The highest	Average
1	July 2011	TOEIC	115	875	361
2	December 2011	TOEIC	25	715	285.37

Source: English Department, Sriwijaya State Polytechnic (2011)

The problems in this research are: (1) Is there any significant difference in reading achievement between the students who have treatment and that of those who do not? And (2) How much does weblog contribute in improving students' reading achievement? In line with the above, the objectives of the study are to find out if there is a significant (1) difference in reading achievement between the students who have treatment and that of those who do not and (2) contribution of weblog in improving students' reading achievement.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the writer used quasi experimental research: non equivalent pretest and posttest design (Creswell, 2005) to identify the difference of students' reading and writing achievements that were taught through weblog and that of those who were not. In this study, the writer used two groups, experimental group and control group.

The population of this study were all students of the second semester of English Department in Hospitality Industry Concentration Program of Sriwijaya State Polytechnic in the academic years 2011/2012. They were 91 students in the population. The writer used purposive sampling technique in which she chose 40 students as the sample based on the criteria (1)The average score reading of the semester one students was between 66 –

85,(2)The average score of their TOEIC was between 255 – 600,and (3)Students were taught by the same lecturer.

The 40 students were divided into two groups; each consists of 20 students. Then, to determine which group belonged to experimental and control, the writer used 'flipping a coin' technique. The head represented the experimental group and the tail represented the control group.

The writer collected the data by using pre-test and posttest. The pretest of reading was administered to see the students' achievement in comprehending the texts provided before getting the treatment. Meanwhile, the posttest of reading skill was given to find out the students' achievement after the treatment was conducted. The results of the two tests were computed using t-test.

The data were in form of scores of the pretests and posttests of reading skill of control and experimental groups. The writer analyzed the data by using paired sample t find out the increasing achievement while the independent t-test was used to find out whether the treatment increased achievements in reading significantly or not. She wanted to prove whether or not the difference was caused by the treatment given. Then, the data were computed by using SPSS release 16.0.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1
The Score Distributions of Students' Reading Achievements

Variables	Score	Experimental Group		Control Group	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Reading	Lowest	25	50	35	53
	Highest	75	88	60	85
	Mean	48.55	69.65	43.20	63.25
	Gain Mean	21.10		20.05	

Table 2
Paired Sample t-test of Reading Achievements

Variables	Score	Experimental Group		Control Group	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Reading	Mean	48.55	69.65	43.20	63.25
	Std. Deviation	13.399	10.255	6.795	8.472
	Mean Difference	21.10		20.05	
	Std. Deviation	7.312		8.730	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	
	t-obtained	12.905		10.261	
	t-table	1.729		1.729	

Table 3
Independent Sample t-test of Reading Achievements

Group	N	Mean	SD				
Post-test Reading Skill Experimental Group	20	69.65	10.225				
Control Group	20	63.25	8.472				
Second output							
	t-obtained	Df	t-table	Sig. (2 tailed)	Alpha 0.05	Mean difference	Interpretation
Post-test Reading Skill Equal variances assumed	2.155	38	2.024	0.038	<0.05	6.400	Significant difference

The writer used the Linear Regression Analysis to know the extent the contribution of weblog in improving the students' reading achievement. The finding showed that the correlation coefficients (R) between the pretest and the posttest on reading achievement of the experimental group was 0.842. This result described that weblog had significantly positive correlation in improving the students' reading achievement. Next, the determinant coefficient (R-square) was 0.503. It means that the increase of the students' reading achievement was influenced by the use of weblog 70.8%. So it was concluded that the contribution of weblog in improving students' reading achievement was 70.8 %, while the rest 29.2 % was contributed by the unexplained factors.

Table 4
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis of Reading Achievement

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.842	0.708	0.692	5.673

Based on the findings, the writer interprets some results. First, there is a significant progress on reading achievement between students who had treatment and that of those who had not. Reading needs a lot of practice. During the treatment students practiced to read critically. They were asked to use the reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and guessing meaning through contexts to comprehend the texts. The students were encouraged to be the independent learners to do their best since what they would learn had much knowledge and information that support their major such as the reading texts Online Hotel Reservation, E-ticket, Heritage Tourism, Deluxe Hotel, etc. Second, there is a significant contribution of weblog in improving students' reading achievements. Weblog is part of digital technology. It has some features that include instant publishing of text or graphics text or graphic to the web without sophisticated technical knowledge, ways for people

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provide comments or feedback to each blog spot, the opportunity to archive past blog posts by date and hyperlinks to other blogger. So weblog enables the students to post their creativity in doing their tasks as the students. In this case, they support bloggers as facilities that offer information and comments over the act. It is clear that weblog represents a perfect medium for literacy and is an excellent way to fuse educational technology and literacy inside the classroom.

In the reading treatments, the students expressed their ideas and exchanged their views on topics of common interest which not only keep them updating but also being effective contributors of new ideas. This is in with line to one of the advantages of weblog, the usage of weblogs are convenient, hence people tend to use them more frequently. It also supports students to get into the habit of writing which helps them in all their future endeavors.

Third, there are some unexplained factors that contributed to the students' reading achievements, 29.2% for reading. The factor can be that is (1) the students like reading.

Finally, the results and the explanations above give implication that weblog could give much contribution to improve the students' reading achievements. The teachers can use weblog as the medium to improve the students' creativity in increasing their language skills including reading and writing.

CONCLUSIONS

Some conclusions are drawn in this study. First, there is a significant difference in achievement between students who have treatment and that of those who do not. The mean score of the posttest of students' reading achievement of the experimental group is higher than the mean score of the posttest of students' reading achievement of the control group.

Second, there is a significant contribution of weblog in improving the students' reading achievement. The contribution of weblog indicates that weblog helps the students to improve their reading strategies to get a better result.

Weblog, as an online journal, has motivated the students to be creative and smart in responding their given tasks in learning activities. Weblog is very useful to develop students' literacy through the digital technology. Weblog can increase their English Proficiency, especially for reading since reading is the skill that deals with comprehending what has been read.

To sum up, weblog is the perfect medium to increase the students' literacy through the social digital technology.

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