IMPROVING WRITING 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 writing skill through weblog. It was aimed at finding out whether or not there is a significant difference in writing achievements between the students who have treatment and that of those who have not, and how much weblog contributes in improving students' writing 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 and writing between 66 – 85, (2) their TOEIC score was between 255 – 600, 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 writing tests based on the suitable topics of their major. 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 writing compared to the students who had not. This study found out that weblog gives much contribution in improving the students' writing achievements.

Keywords: Writing, weblog

The social networking has offered the teaching and learning process that can be done at any time and in any place. Duffy and Bruns (2006, p.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-working 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.

Sriwijaya State Polytechnic has used technology in teaching and learning process. Polytechnic has facilitated the teaching and learning activities by using the technology, such as computer, in focus, scanner, and printer. Polytechnic uses them so that the lecturers, students, and administrators are familiar with the digital technology. To support the online activities, Sriwijaya State Polytechnic has increased the bandwidth for the internet to 10MB. Before it was only 2 MB. It means that they can access the information from internet faster than before. The process of loading (upload and download) runs smoother.

Polytechnic produces ready well-trained students to post good positions in companies, offices, and banks. Due to that, Polytechnic students should be familiar with weblog to support their jobs in the future. Polytechnic students should master their subjects based on their study program. It is necessary that Polytechnic students have skill in writing especially in English. Writing is one of important language skills. Troyka (1987, pp. 3-4) states that writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose. The purposes of writing are to express one's self, provide information for one's reader, persuade one's reader, and create a literary work. Since skill means ability, writing skill means the ability to express ideas, thought, and feeling to other people in written symbols to make the readers understand the ideas or information conveyed. Moreover, Langan (2008, p.15) states that "To communicate effectively, people must constantly adjust their speech to suit their purpose and audience". This same idea is for writing. When they write for others, it is crucial to know both their purpose for writing and the audience who will be reading their work.

Writing has a mutual relationship with reading. What are read can be expressed in written form through writing. Reading and writing connection shows that the extents of students' reading determines the power of their writing. So in writing skill, it can not neglect reading skill. Reading and writing provide the foundation of education and the basic requirement for all academic disciplines, Huffaker (2004, p.2). Then, Camacho (2005,p.28) suggests an idea why reading and writing should be integrated in teaching process. He states that an important point in the theory about reading and writing is that both share similar linguistic and cognitive elements. Moreover, Harmer (2003, p.68) states "Reading texts provide good models for English writing. Reading and writing need critical thinking. When reading and writing are taught together, students achieve better in both areas and the activities in both areas support each other to become good reader and writer. Reader and writer rely on their background knowledge to construct meaning and both make use of cueing systems (graphic, semantic, syntactic) to allow them to predict and confirm meaning. The knowledge accumulates through reading, while writing is putting the knowledge into paper (Alwasilah, 2012). Reading and writing in English are 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.

Writing is the process of expressing someone's ideas in written symbols for communicative purposes. Troyka (1987, pp.3-4) states "Writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose". The purposes of writing are to express one's self, to provide information for one's reader, to persuade one's reader, and to create a literacy work. Writing skill reflects the ability to express ideas, thought, and feeling to other people in written symbols to make the readers understand the ideas of information conveyed. In college level, the students deal with the academic writing. It is a kind of writing that is required to do

such as making reports. In the writing process, the students should consider the audience, tone, and the purpose of their writing. Good writing in English needs good grammar and organization. Good grammatical structures help the readers understand what are being conveyed. The elements of writing should not be neglected such as grammar, the mechanics of writing, the choice of words, and critical thinking in writing. Writing can be in form of paragraph and essay. Paragraph and essay writing are similar in principles. According to Oshima and Hoque (1991,p.16),"A paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing which a group of related sentences develops one main ideas". A good paragraph should have three major structural parts: topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence, and two other elements: unity and coherence.

Teaching writing is very important for students because writing is essential skill that can be a key of successful learners in studying English in academic context and social life. Langan (2008, p.15) states that "When you write for others, it is a crucial to know both your purpose for writing and the audience who will be reading your work. The ability to adjust your writing to suit your purpose and audience will serve you well not only in the classroom, but also in the workplace and beyond.

Academic writing is the communication through the written texts and this needs a practice because it consists of some elements that convey the information. Mckay (2012, p.1) states that writing is a skill that can be learned. It means that writing can be learned through practicing a lot.

Oshima and Hogue (1991, p.3) state that for both native speakers and new learners of English it is important to note that writing is a process, not a product. A piece of writing, whether it is a composition or short story, is never complete or perfect; that means that the writing is always possible to review and revise again and again. There are four main stages in the writing process: prewriting, planning, writing and revising draft, and writing the final copy.

Polytechnic data show that the students' competence in writing is still disappointed and under the target (Polytechnic, 2011). Their 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 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, p.4). It measures the everyday listening and reading skills of people working in an international workplace environments. The score of this test indicates 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 International	115	875	361
2	December 2011	TOEIC Institutional	25	715	285.37

Source: English Department, Sriwijaya State Polytechnic

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, p.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 are where ideas are shared, questions are asked and answered, and social cohesion are developed.

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, p.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.

According to Dudeney and Hockly (2007, p.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 instants publishing of text or graphics to the web without sophisticated technical 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.

Weblogs are very important for writing. The writer/teacher can post the reading text followed by some questions about it to encourage the students to comprehend the text. Then, from their answers, it is suggested for them to retell it in a good paragraph. Their retelling about the topic provided will be discussed with other community through weblogs. Weblogs will motivate them to be confidence in publishing their ideas through writing.

So, the problems of study are formulated as follows:(1) Is there any significant difference in writing achievement between the students who have treatment and that of those who do not? and (2) How much does weblog contribute in improving students' writing achievement? In line with the problems, the objectives of the study are to find out if there is a significant (1) difference in writing achievement between the students who have treatment

and that of those who do not and (2) contribution of weblog in improving students' writing 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' 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 writing 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 'flapping a coin' technique. The head represented the experimental group and the tail represented the control group.

Technique for Collecting the Data

In this research, the writer collected the data by using pre-test and posttest. The pretest of writing was administered to see their basic skill in writing a paragraph of a topic that was provided before the students got a treatment. Meanwhile, the posttests of the writing skill was given to find out the students' achievement after the treatments were conducted. The results of the two tests were computed using t-test.

Technique for Analyzing the Data

The data were in form of scores of the pretests and posttests of writing skill of control and experimental groups. The writer analyzed the data by using paired sample to find out the increasing achievement while the independent t-test was used to find out whether the treatment increased achievements in writing 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

Table 1
The Score Distribution of Students' Writing Achievement

Variables	Score	Experimental Group		Control Group	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Writing	Lowest	41	66	59	64
	Highest	75	86	70	80
	Mean	63.80	76.60	63.80	70.15
	Gain mean	12.80		6.35	

Table 2
Paired Sample t-test of Writing Achievement

Variables	Score	**Experimental Group**		**Control Group**	
		Pretest	**Posttest**	**Pretest**	**Posttest**
Writing	Mean	63.80	76.60	63.80	70,20
	Std. Deviation	8.192	5.807	3.806	4.066
	Mean Difference	12.80		6.400	
	Std. Deviation	4.742		2.836	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	
	t-obtained	12.072		10.093	
	t-table	1.729		1.729	

Table 3
Independent Sample t-test of Writing Achievements

First output				
Group	N	Mean	SD	
Posttest Writing Skill Experimental Group Control Group	20 20	76.60 70.20	5.8 07 4.8	

			06				
Second output							
	t-obtained	df	t-table	Sig (2-tailed)	Alpha 0.05	Mean difference	Interpretation
Posttest Writing Skill Equal variances assumed	4.031	38	2.024	0.000	<0.05	6.400	Significant difference

Table 4
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis of Writing Achievement

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.823	0.678	0.660	3.385

Source:Primary Data , see Appendix O (Model Summary)

Based on the findings, here are the interpretations. First, there is a significant progress on writing achievement between students who had treatment and that of those who had not. Writing deals with the process of expressing someone's ideas in written symbols for communicative purposes. According to Troyka (1987, pp.3-4) "Writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for purpose". So writing skill reflects the ability to express the ideas, thought to other people in written symbols to make them understand the ideas of information conveyed. Writing skill also needs practice a lot. During the treatments, some students had turns to write some paragraphs and others give comments and corrections about their writings. Teacher and students discussed their writings. Since reading and writing are the integrated skills, reading texts provide good models for English writing.

Second, there is a significant contribution of weblog in improving students' writing achievements. Weblog is part of digital technology. It has some features that include instant publishing of text or graphics of text or graphic to the web without sophisticated technical 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 blogger. In line with it, Huffaker (2004, p.3) states that technology has offered a new type of literacy as digital fluency to consider. Moreover, Huffaker (2004, p.1) states "Weblogs are personal journals or diaries

and provide an online venue where self-expression and creativity are encouraged and online communities are built, provide an excellent opportunity for education to advance literacy through storytelling and dialogues". 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 writing 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.

Finally, the results and the explanations above give implication that weblog could give much contribution to improve the students' writing achievement. The teachers can use weblog as the medium to improve the students' creativity in increasing their language skills including writing. In line with above, weblog helps the teaching learning process run well and contributes a better achievement for the students.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the interpretations above, some conclusions are drawn. 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' writing achievement of the experimental group is higher than the mean score posttest of students' writing achievement of the control group.

Second, there is a significant contribution of weblog in improving the students' writing achievement. The contribution of weblog also indicates that weblog helps the students to improve their writing 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 and writing since reading is the skill that deals with comprehending what has been read, while writing is the skill that deals with writing what has been comprehended with the right mechanics.

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

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