

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY OF THE ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT STUDY PROGRAM THROUGH BLOGS AT INDO GLOBAL MANDIRI UNIVERSITY PALEMBANG

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were to find out the progress in students' writing achievement after they were taught by using blogs, and to find out the significant difference in students' writing achievement between the students who were taught by using blogs and those who were not. A quasi-experimental method was used in this study. The population of the study was all the students in Faculty of Economic at Indo Global Mandiri University in the academic year 2014/2015. The sample consisted of 40 students where 20 students for experimental group and 20 students for control group, and was selected by using purposive sampling. In order to get the data, a test was used. The data was obtained in the form of writing test. The test was given twice, to the experimental and control groups, as pre-test and post-test. The result of the test was analyzed by using t-test through SPSS program. The finding showed that (1) There were some progresses in students' writing due to the use of blog during the teaching and learning activities, and (2) There was a significant difference between the students who were taught by using blogs and those who were not.

Key Words: *Improving, Writing Ability, Blogs*

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the important skills in teaching English. It has always occupied place in most English language courses. Writing skill is good to develop because it can unify ideas and thoughts, and translate somebody's thoughts for other people. In addition, according to Webster (1999, p.23), writing is as a way of discovering ideas as well as a way of expressing them. It is a creative process which is acted to express the ideas, thoughts and feelings in written form. Many people need to learn writing in English for occupational or academic purposes. To write well, people must have good capabilities in writing. Moreover, someone who wants to write must know the steps in writing process and aspects of writing. The writer must be able to organize the ideas to construct the sentences, to use punctuation and spelling well. Besides, they must be able to arrange the writing into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and text.

According to Kellogg (1994), the students take a long time to master the writing skill because of several reasons. The first is words in thousand; the vocabulary mastery of students is different among each other, because their capabilities are different. The students have difficulties to arrange the words to make a sentence because of their vocabulary limitation and inability to express their idea into written language. The second, they do not know how to correct mistakes. The main purpose of learners writing activity is to catch grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. The learners just write what they want to write based on their idea without thinking that their writing was full of errors. They can

not correct the errors because they didn't master the basic of it, like grammar. The third is they fear being judged too harshly by their work. The students usually feel unconfident with their written because of the vocabulary limitation and errors that would they make. So, they feel fear if they can not make the best written. The last, they do not understand the instructions or the title. Generally, the learners make a mistake in exploring their idea into written language, because they do not understand what the instructions of the topic or the meaning of the title is. It can make the learners out of topic or misunderstood in explore their idea. The most of students get difficulty in expressing their ideas because they have no opinion and idea to be shared. Students sometimes try to think everything they can write without thinking about the time and whether it is appropriate or not to their topic. Therefore, they just waste valuable time just for getting started. It is undeniable that writing is not easy task to do. Many people find it difficult to write for many reasons. As a result, most of teachers conduct writing only as compulsory activity without adjusting the way of teaching writing to what it needs in the classroom. Knowing the facts mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the researcher is interested in conducting the research. In addition, since the researcher's major is in English education fields, she would like to focus her research on English writing.

Nowadays, using technology in teaching and learning activities is good way that can increase the information, improve communication, enhance reporting of information and be more efficiently collected, analyze and share data. Molenda&Pershing (2008, p.54) state

that technology can help learners not only to master higher-level skills but also to apply new knowledge to novel situations, especially those outside the classroom—referred to as transfer of learning. It could be said that it is a medium that can be used as a tool to enhance students' attraction in learning. Choosing or using technology in teaching and learning could set the learners to have opportunities to practice the new skills in context that resembles the real world. Technological tools, e.g. the internet, become more common, teachers and students have increasingly integrated them into their work. Internet was needed to support the students in writing skill and develop the teaching of writing. Internet is the common tool used in daily life. By using internet, people can access and share their idea. According to Vurdien (2012), the construction of knowledge becomes significant whilst the students shape and interpret their own meanings in writing upon the basis of their worldviews through blog. Furthermore, blogs and social networking sites provide users with new opportunities and incentives for personal writing (Godwin-Jones, 2008).

Therefore, it was considerably interesting to investigate the effectiveness of blog as one of media to develop the writing ability of the economic management study program. The use of blog was one of the techniques that could be used by the teacher in relation to teaching English as foreign language and it seemed more interesting than without them. Using blog might make the students enjoy in learning English and it could help them in writing more quickly. For these reasons, the researcher was interested in doing an experimental research entitled "Improving Students' Writing Ability of the Economic Management Study Program through Blogs at Indo Global Mandiri University Palembang".

The problems were formulated in the following questions: (1) Was there any significant progress in students' writing achievement after they were taught by using blogs? (2) Was there any significant difference in students' writing achievement between the students who were taught by using blogs and those who were not?

2. Findings and Discussion

A. Writing Activity

Writing is pictured as an activity which encourages learners to develop the way of thinking. Once children start their first class at elementary school, the teacher teaches them to write. Teacher usually teaches them to write letters or combination of letters, the students can write it. Then for junior high school, senior high school or college, they have to learn writing tasks. There are several stages of writing that help the students in writing, pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. In the pre-writing, the researcher will give the students a topic to write. The students must gather all of their ideas that related to the topic, so that they can write a good composition. The second stage is drafting. When the topic has been chosen, the next step to be done is working on the draft. It focuses on the content. The third

stage is revising means that the students had finished doing the first draft; they submitted their work to the researcher. After that, the researcher gave feedback with some notes on their composition. The last is editing. In this stage, the students edited their composition and give it back to the researcher to be evaluated, if there are still errors in the composition, the researcher invited the students to discuss about their problems or the difficulties that they find in writing the composition.

The four stages of writing have an important role for students in improving students' writing ability and these activities also need the cooperative work between the teacher and the students. At the end of writing process, both the teacher and the students find that writing is an interesting activity. In writing skill, there are key concepts to make students easy in writing. Students have to have an idea before they start to write but it is sometimes difficult for them to get an idea. They will easy to write if there is a tool that can make them interested in writing. For example, using blogs can help them in writing, from it, they can write well.

Paragraph is a distinct selection of piece of writing usually consisting of several sentences dealing with a single theme. Some writing instructors' specify that a paragraph must be at least five sentences long, even many students define paragraph in terms of length, a paragraph can be half a page long, etc. However there is no minimum number of sentences required for a paragraph. A paragraph must only be as long as it needs to be. The length of a paragraph may vary based on its function. Length and appearance do not determine whether a section in a paper is a paragraph. For instance, in some styles of writing, particularly journalistic styles, a paragraph can be just one sentence long.

In writing paragraph, it is important to keep the function of the paragraph in mind. Paragraphs have many functions; to express an idea, to introduce the topic, to support a thesis, to conclude an essay, to describe someone or something, and to share the dialog. The function of paragraph will determine its structure. When learning how to write paragraphs, consider the function of the paragraph to determine the best structure for the paragraph.

Using media in teaching and learning is one of the strategies toward the success in teaching and learning process. Using media can bring the motivation to the students to learn. It can increase students' motivation and bring the motivation to the student to learn. It can increase students' motivation and bring good effects for students' psychology. Medium is everything that can be used to deliver message in order to stimulate students' thought, feeling, attention, and interest so that the teaching and learning process happen. In short, it can be said that teaching media can be defined as the tool that is appropriate to deliver and facilitate the students to explore the knowledge.

Related to how the term media defined, technology can be classified as one of media in teaching. One of the major challenges in education is to ensure that all students are prepared for today's more technologically

advanced world. Using technology in teaching and learning then can set the learners to have opportunities to practice the new skill in context that resemble the real world. One of technological tools is blog, it is needed to support the students in writing skill and develop the teaching of writing. Furthermore, blog is one form of technology used widely by community. In addition, Vurdien (2012) stated that using blogs encourage students to show their ability to become independent learners. Hence it is imperative that the right type of activity is chosen when using blogs as a tool for learning so that learners can profit from the learning environment. Moreover, according to Zhang (2009), blogs have formidable potentials as a useful tool for the teaching of EFL writing classes. Blogs offer a collaborative environment whereby students can share their ideas and in some blogs they have a facility to comment on each other's work. Therefore, students are essentially writing for an audience which is said to improve writing capacity.

B. Using Blogs in Improving Students' Writing Ability

Blogs have been used in classrooms for a number of years now and the evidence suggests that blogs can positively enhance learning and more particular, in relation to the skills of writing many researchers have claimed that blogs can improve writing skills (Downes 2004 and Hall and Davidson 2007). Research has confirmed many positive uses of the blog which include the development of a student's analytical and critical skills through a more student centered environment. By publishing the blog on the Internet, the student had the possibility of writing for readers beyond classmates, not usually possible in discussion forums. In this study, blog was also a form of writing exercise. The cycle of blogging activities such as making blog posts, viewing other bloggers' posts, commenting and reflecting on them were beneficial in polishing the writing skills. Insituations where they could or relate to certain words, they had the choice to refer to online dictionaries and using the Internet, they were able to keep the grammar in their writing intact.

By using blog as a tool of communication, the learner could actively constructs knowledge by translating ideas into words built upon the reactions and responses of others. This created an environment for an active learning among students that could present positive impacts on the writing skills as well as increase learner autonomy respectively. In this study, blog was used as an effective tool in teaching writing in English which can help to improve and their writing and keep them motivated. A class blog also may be completely public and accessible to anyone online. The benefit of making a site public was that it created a broader sense of audience and of participating not only in the university community but perhaps a global community as well.

C. Method of Research

In conducting this research, the researcher applied quasi-experimental design. The design involves

experimental and control groups in which both were given a pre-test and post-test.

In quasi experiment, there still exists a treatment, in the sense that the researcher will introduce a treatment on experimental program (Sutter, 1998, p.204). There were two groups, experimental and control groups. The groups took pre-test and post-test, but the experimental was taught using blogs while the other one was taught using a conventional method. It means that the experimental received the treatment whereas the control group did not.

Before the treatment, the pretest was given to the sample students. Then, the researcher taught the experimental group using blogs. After the treatment, the posttest was given exactly the same as the pretest.

Moreover, a variable could be defined as an attribute of a person or of an object. There were two kinds of variables in this research: independent and dependent variables. The independent variable was the variable which influences other variable. While dependent variable, on the other hand, was the variable which is observed and measured to determine the effects of the independent variable. In this research, the independent variable was blogs. The dependent variable was the students' writing ability.

C. Population and Sample

1) Population

Population is the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which the researcher would like to generalize the results of the study (Wallen and Fraenkel, 1991, p.129). The population of this research was all the second semester students of economic management study program at Indo Global Mandiri University Palembang in the academic year 2014/2015 with a total number of 111 students.

2) Sample

In selecting the sample from the population, purposive random sampling technique was used. Among 111 students, it was taken 40 of them as the sample of the study. Based on the classification, the researcher chose 20 of students, as experimental group, and another 20 of students, in the control group. The sample was selected and equally divided into experimental group (20 students) and control group (20 students).

Table 1. The Sample of the Study

No	Group	Number of students
1	The Experimental group	20
2	The control group	20
	Total	40

D. Technique for Collecting the Data

In collecting the data, the writer gave a writing test. Arikunto (2002, p.139) defines that a test is question or exercise or other ways used to measure skills, knowledge, intelligence, ability, or talents of individual or group. According to Brown (2004, p.3) a test is a

method of measuring a person's ability; knowledge, or performance in a given domain. In this study, a test is the way to know the students' writing ability.

The researcher used pre-test and post-test to both the experimental and control group in order to know the result of the teaching and learning process. The first test was the pre-test where the students would be tested before the treatment given to match the pairs from the two groups. It was used to find out the information of students' writing ability before the students exposed to the experimental teaching. The second one was post-test; it was administered to find out the students writing achievement after the treatment.

E. Validity and Reliability of the Test

1) Validity of the Test

Validity is the degree to which a test measure what it is supposed to measure or can be used successfully for the purpose for which it is intended (Richard, 1992, p.396). A test as the instrument of collecting data should be valid and reliable. Content validity is the extent in which a test measures a representative sample of the subject matter content (Hatch and Farhady, 1982, p.61). The validity of the test materials was checked through the content validity. Since the researcher conducted a research on writing skill, the test given should represent the content of writing to be measured such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic.

2) Reliability of the Test

Reliability is the most important characteristics of a test result. It is measure of the degree to which the items of parts of a test are consistency with each other (Richard., 1992, p.146). It is very useful in judging the value of instrument reliability.

The researcher used interrater to find out the reliability of the test. According to Brown (2007), interrater reliability is essentially a variation of the equivalent from type of reliability in that the scores are usually produced by two raters, the scores will be lined up in columns, and a correlation coefficient will be calculated between them. The coefficient of the result will be calculated using SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solution) be at least 0.60 and preferably higher (Wallen and Fraenkle, 1991).

F. Technique for Analyzing the Data

To organize correcting activity, the researcher gave a correction procedure to the students so that when they were given their composition with some notes on their paper, they were able to check the mistakes. The correction procedure is taken from Raimes (1983).

Table 2. Correction Procedures

No	Symbol	Meaning	Example
1	S	Incorrect spelling	I receive <u>jour</u> letter S
2	W.O.	Wrong Word Order	<u>Always</u> I am happy. W.O.

3	T	Wrong tense	I <u>will go</u> yesterday. T
4	C	Concord subject (Subject and verb do not agree)	The policeman <u>has come</u> . C
5	WF	Wrong form	That car is <u>our</u> . WF
6	S / P	Singular of plural form wrong	We need more <u>apple</u> . S / P
7	[]	Something has been left out.	He hit me on ___ shoulder.
8	[]	Something is not necessary	It was too <u>much</u> [] difficult.
9	?M	Meaning is not clear	The view from here is so <u>suggestive</u> . ?M
10	NA	The usage is not appropriate	He <u>requested</u> me to sit down. NA
11	P	Punctuation wrong	<u>Whats</u> yourname! P P

The researcher used t-test to analyze the data obtained. To construct the t-test, the researcher compared the result between the pre-test and the post-test given in each group. In giving the score for students' pre-test and post-test, she asked the assistance of the raters. There were two raters in this study. Both of them are lecturers of English Study Program. They gave the score for both pre-test and the post-test on students' composition profile and then, the result of their scoring was analyzed.

In scoring students' writing, the researcher used rubric that has six aspects of writing composition namely topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence, word choice, mechanics and grammar, and sensory details. Each of the aspect is described in the following table.

Table 3. Composition Profile

	4	3	2	1
Topic Sentence	Topic sentence is well written, correctly placed, and introduces the topic.	Topic sentence is complete and introduces the topic.	Attempt was made to write a topic sentence but it is not effective at introducing the topic.	Topic sentence is unclear and incomplete, and is not introducing the topic.
Supporting Detail Sentence(s)	Paragraph (s) have 6 or more supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	Paragraph (s) have 4-5 supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	Paragraph (s) have 3-4 supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	Paragraph (s) have 0-2 supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.
Conclud	Conclusio	Conclusio	An	No clear

ing Sentence	n is clear, complete, sums up the paragraph and relates back to the topic sentence.	n is complete, relates to the topic, but is simple.	attempt was made to conclude, but is incomplete or does not relate to the topic.	conclusion.
Word Choice	Writer uses adjective words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, and the choice of the words seems accurate, natural and not forced.	Writer uses adjective words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, but occasionally the words are used inaccurately or seem overdone.	Writer uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety, punch or flair.	Writer uses a limited vocabulary that does not communicate strongly or capture the reader's interest.
Mechanics and Grammar	Paragraph has no errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.	Paragraph has one or two punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors.	Paragraph has three to five punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors.	Paragraph has six or more punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors.
Sensory Details	Paragraph includes details that appeal to three or more of the five senses (taste, touch, sound, sight, smell).	Includes details that appeal to three of the five senses.	Includes details that appeal to only two of the five senses.	Includes no details that appeal to one of the five senses.

Based on the composition profile above the highest score was 24 and the lowest score was 0. Besides that, they also got another scoring system for their composition. Based on the composition profile above, the scoring system could be classified into four aspects. The writing category was intended to judge students' writing ability. The scoring is described as follows:

Table 4. Scoring System

Score Range	Category
19-24	Excellent
13-18	Very Good
7-12	Good

0-6	Poor
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G.Result of the Study

The statistical analysis on the post-test of both the experimental group and the control group is described in the following table:

Table 5: The Result of Experimental Group and Control Group

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sign.	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Low	Upp
Equal variances assumed	2.392	.130	39.511	38	.000	10.87500	.27524	10.31781	11.43219
Equal variances not assumed			39.511	37.1666	.000	10.87500	.27524	10.31740	11.43260

From the statistical analyses, the researcher attempts to describe the findings mentioned earlier in this section. First, statistically the students in the experimental group showed progress in their writing ability before and after the treatment. The result showed that there was a significant difference in writing achievement before and after they were exposed using blogs. Since the t-obtained was higher than t-table, the null hypothesis (H₀) was rejected and the research hypothesis (H₁) was accepted. It can be stated that there was a significant difference in writing achievement before and after treatment in the experimental group. In short, there were some progress in students' writing achievement before and after the treatment.

Since there was a significant difference before and after the treatment, the mean difference between pre-test and post-test in experimental group was 12.325, the researcher could say that using blogs was effective to improve the students' achievement in writing. The researcher was convinced that the improvement in writing achievement of experimental group students was a result of the technique and their own efforts. This could be seen from the results of topic sentence, supporting detail sentence, concluding sentence, word choice, mechanics and grammar, and sensory details tests that were used to find out their topic sentence, supporting detail sentence, concluding sentence, word choice, mechanics and grammar, and sensory details mastery. Furthermore, based on the researcher's observations, the students liked English and seemed to high motivation in learning English too. In fact, 85% of the students in experimental group received an excellent score in the post-test.

It is important to note that during the study, the researcher applied blogs as a media to help students develop their ideas. The purpose of the implementation of blogs was achieved in that the students wrote more paragraphs and the paragraphs they wrote was longer, more organized and showed a sense of English academic writing when they used blogs as a media. In their recount texts, they wrote about 10 sentences even more in the post-test. According to Zhang (2009), blogs have formidable potentials as a useful tool for the teaching of EFL writing classes. Blogs offer a collaborative environment whereby students can share their ideas and in some blogs they have a facility to comment on each other's work. Therefore, students are essentially writing for an audience which is said to improve writing capacity.

The use of blogs in writing is very useful in terms improving writing skill of students. By using blogs, students can comprehend what should be written for example the structure of the text, the tense, and the punctuation easily because in that blog there were some errors made by some students and they knew which one should be revised and not. The positive significance between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test was assumed to have been induced by the treatment. Blog is one of alternative media that can help either the teacher in teaching writing or the students in generating their ideas in their writing. Moreover, this kind of media is also easy to be found and simple to be applied in the classroom. Therefore, blog in teaching writing was considered as an alternative media to teach writing.

There is much information about blog that can be used for writing class especially for recount text and it was much more effective to generated student's ideas and automatically can improve the student's writing skill. Research has confirmed many positive uses of the blog which include the development of a student's analytical and critical skills through a more student centered environment. By publishing the blog on the Internet, the student had the possibility of writing for readers beyond classmates, not usually possible in discussion forums. Last but not least, the effectiveness of blog is really promising because by using it as a media, students was sharpened their writing achievement.

The researcher also assumed that the increase in writing achievement as a result of the use of blog during the treatment. The researcher believed that the selected materials were appropriate for them in terms of levels of difficulty in that the students had a little difficulty in understanding them. During the study, the students had many opportunities to write. They also had a lot of opportunities for peer review. It is logical that why they improved their writing skills after the treatment.

Another point to discuss is that the researcher employed blog to make writing a more meaningful and interesting activity for the students. The researcher thinks its high time English teacher to move to a process approach when teaching writing in that the teacher should not assess students' writing as a final product only but as a process. Consequently, the teacher has to

be involved in the process of writing as a facilitator or a guide who is available to them. The writing activities would contribute to the increase of students' writing habit. Teachers need to help students build the writing habit so that they recognize writing as being normal part of classroom practice and they come to writing tasks with as much enthusiasm as they do other activities. In addition, it is also important to discuss the significant improvement in control group which was not given any treatment. As we observed the summary findings, the mean difference between pre-test and post-test were 8.9750. However, the increase of man scores in control group was not as high as in experimental was 19.8500. Based on the analysis of the independent sample test of the post-test in the experimental group and in the control group, the t-obtained was 39.511. At the significance level of $p < 0.05$ for two-tailed test and (df) 38, the t-table was 2.0244. There was a significant difference in students' test scores between the students who were taught by using blogs and those who were not. In conclusion, using blog was proven to be effective to improve students' writing ability.

3. Conclusions and Suggestions

A. Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of the study, some important points could be concluded as follows: Blog was proven to be effective to improve student writing achievement. There were some progresses in students' writing due to the use of blog during the teaching and learning activities. Using blog can be useful for making communication and improving students' writing ability. The use of blog is plausible to apply in other writing activities. In addition, there is a significant difference in writing achievement between the students who are taught by using blog and those who are not. For the student, blog was an effective to improve students' writing ability. It can be seen that the mean score of experimental group was higher than the mean score of control group. In short, it could be concluded that the use of blog was effective to improve students' achievement in writing recount text.

B. Suggestions

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the researcher intended to offer some suggestions. First, the English teachers should provide the students with numerous meaningful opportunities and regular writing practices for them to write. This is always possible since ideas and inspirations are lurking everywhere. The researcher assumed that the root of the problem of writing is that students are lack of writing practice. It is our responsibility to build students' writing habit by creating atmosphere and exposure for writing activities. Second, it is essential that English teachers utilize various techniques in teaching writing in the hope that writing is no longer seen as a frightening and boring skill to master. Third, English teachers should shift from the old paradigm product approach to process approach in

teaching writing in that the teachers do not assess students' final product of writing but also have to interfere the process of writing itself. In fact the process itself can make students have fun with their writing.

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