

IMPLEMENTING PROCESS WRITING STRATEGY USING WEBLOGS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at improving the ability of the X MIA 3 students of Senior High School 2 Lamongan in writing descriptive text through the implementation of process writing strategy facilitated by weblogs. This research was a collaborative action research which consisted of four stages: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The data required were gathered by using observation checklists, field notes, and questionnaire. The results of the above-mentioned instruments indicate that the students show their active participation and good interest in attending the learning activity. The group discussion regarding the assigned objects in the pre-writing stage and the implementation of media weblogs can make the students participate more actively when the learning procedure is implemented. Meanwhile, the writing ability of the students also improves as proven by the fact that every student can successfully increase his/her score in at least 10 points, which indicates an improvement to a higher level. It is also found that all of the writing aspects, such as content, organization, and language are improved due to the activity of pre-writing that the students do. The observation towards the assigned objects and idea generation makes the students have a clear plan regarding what to write on the draft.

Keywords: writing process, writing strategy, weblogs, students' ability, descriptive text

INTRODUCTION

Before the 1970's, writing instruction focuses on rules of grammar (Pour-Mohammadi, Abidin, & Fong, 2012). Today research shows that it is more important to create an environment that encourages students to take risks in their writing which means less concentration on conventional rules of writing and more on the expression of ideas. Among the four basic skills to master in learning English, writing is often thought as the most important and difficult one. The importance of writing comes from its usefulness, while the difficulty of writing comes from the complexity that the writer should consider. Writing is a fundamental component of language. When a child writes, thoughts and knowledge are blended together creating a unique meaning (Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010). Consequently, students identify the skill of writing, as more difficult than listening and reading (Berman & Cheng, 2010).

Writing has always been seen as an important skill in English language acquisition. This importance is due to the fact that it reinforces grammatical structures and vocabulary that educators strive to teach their students. It is the area in which learners need to be offered adequate time to develop their writing skill. Therefore more time should be devoted to it in the classroom containing ELLs so that they will be

prepared to effectively communicate in real life as well as academic situations (Ismail, 2011). Exposing them to the writing process itself through various venues is an excellent way to reach this goal.

Additionally, writing skill can be developed when the learners' interests are acknowledged and when they are given frequent six opportunities actually to practice writing (Ismail, 2011). The aspects contained in the writing product such as content, organization, and language demand the writer has a high order of thinking skill. The writer has to always consider whether those aspects have been encompassed before the writing product is eventually published.

The stated difficulty can lead the learners to be lazy and uninterested in doing writing activity. This phenomenon is proven by what has been found by the researchers in the preliminary research conducted in the X MIA 3 class of Senior High School 2 Lamongan. The result of the preliminary research shows that the students have problems with both ability and participation in writing. The problem of writing ability can be seen from the average score resulted from the students' recent descriptive texts assessed which are only 59,5. Most of the students' works have problems with developing the ideas or the content. The ideas are not rich, organising the text in a sequenced order; one idea

is often not related to another and dealing with grammar and vocabulary. The grammatical errors and misspellings frequently occur.

Meanwhile, according to some students who are asked in an unconstructed interview, they argue that the writing activity created by the teacher is mostly monotonous since the writing task is usually given without being facilitated by some strategies or media. Therefore, it is obvious that the students of X MIA 3 need strategy and attractive medium which are able to improve the students' writing skill and involve the students' active participation in searching about the topic being discussed.

In order to solve the writing problems raised, the researchers have proposed the process writing strategy to be implemented. Process writing strategy demands the writer's focus on the proceedings of making a good composition, and restrain them from imitating the modeling of text. Comparing to other strategies, process writing has special stages that differ it from the others. By getting the feedback on the draft from others, the writer is able to recognize and revise what needs to be improved. Consequently, the writing quality will be better.

However, the stages of process writing require much time to be done in class. Therefore, the researchers employ media weblogs to make the activities done in the class more time-saving. The weblog is chosen as the medium due to its features that can help English learners write better. Weblogs can be personalized and decorated based on the owner's preference.

There are two objectives of this research. First, to find out if process writing strategy using weblogs has a significant impact on the improvement of students' ability in writing descriptive text. Second, to give students knowledge about how to implement process writing strategy using weblogs. Kelley (2008) has noted that such personalization of weblog can encourage learner's sense of possession over the ideas and has them sustain the spirit and motivation. Meanwhile, the students, as well as the teacher, can also give feedback towards the writing works posted. Zhang (2009) affirms that one of the weblog's facilities in which the comments and feedback are given enables the learners to know and learn what should be revised on the draft posted.

Using a blog requires no knowledge of HTML consequently, due to this ease of use despite not being created for use in the language classroom, in educational settings worldwide students are increasingly using blogs and a lot of support for blogs has been generated. Blogs offer a collaborative environment whereby students can read each other's posts, 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 (Zhang, 2009). In this research, weblogs are combined to facilitate process writing strategy in order to improve the X MIA 3 students' descriptive text writing skill. Weblogs are utilized when the students do pre-writing; the picture of assigned objects and list of vocabulary are posted on the teacher-researchers weblog page, drafting; the students write the rough draft directly on the weblog page, giving feedback to each other, revising and editing the drafts based on the feedback given, and posting the final draft.

METHODS

The research is carried out at Senior High School 2 Lamongan located in Jl. Veteran no. 1 Lamongan. The subjects of this research are the students of X MIA 3 in the

second semester of the 2014-2015 academic year. This class has 40 students consisting of 17 boys and 23 girls. However, the research is focused on 37 students since the other three cannot attend the meetings in which treatment and final task are given.

This research belongs to the collaborative action research which consists of four stages; planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, the researchers and the collaborator have prepared the strategy of process writing, lesson plan, material that are taken from various sources, media, and research instruments such as observation checklist, field notes, and questionnaire. Besides, the criteria of success are also set. The students have to increase their scores in at least 10 points and participate actively during the lesson proven by the field notes, and observation checklist resulting good score.

In the implementing stage, the researchers teach the descriptive text to the students based on the procedure written in the lesson plan. In the observation stage, the collaborator is observing the teaching-learning activity in the class using the observation checklists and field notes. In the reflecting stage, the researcher and the collaborator have evaluated the result of the student's work and the data recorded in the research instruments to decide whether they have reached the criteria of success.

This research takes a cycle consisting of four meetings conducted on February, 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th. In brief, the learning procedure is as follows. Firstly, the students are delivered some fundamental knowledge about descriptive text and how to use weblogs as the media. Secondly, the students have composed a descriptive text in groups. Thirdly, the students individually do pre-writing in which ideas are collected and generated. Fourthly, every student does drafting and posting the draft on his/her weblog page. Fifthly, at home, the students give peer feedback through weblogs. Lastly, the students revise and edit directly on the weblogs.

Methods of collecting data applied in this research are observation, questionnaire, interview, test, and documentation. Observation is conducted at the time when the learning process took place. It is conducted with an observation sheet which equipped with observation guidelines. Questionnaires are distributed to students and filled by them. Questionnaire functioned to figure out students' response before and after implementing process writing strategy using weblogs. The interview is conducted on respondents who are free to answer some questions asked by the researcher without being bound to particular answers. Test of writing descriptive text is held before and after implementing process writing strategy using weblogs. It aims at measuring students' ability in writing descriptive text. Documentation is taken at the time when the learning process takes place. It is held to obtain the record of students' behavior and activities during the learning process. The documentation is reinforced analysis on each stage.

Methods of data analysis used in this research are the qualitative method and quantitative method. Qualitative method is used to analyze data which obtained from observation, interview, and documentation during the learning process. The analysis is conducted within three steps as follows: (a) observing entire data which have been obtained; (b) arranging the data in units; (c) categorizing them to figure out the change of students' behavior in writing the descriptive text based on the implementation of process writing strategy. Quantitative method is used to analyze data which obtained from the written test. The result of data

analysis quantitatively is counted in the following steps: (a) calculating and summarizing their scores; (b) calculating their average scores.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The improvement of the students' writing ability is indicated by the scores they achieve in the final task conducted at the end of the implementation compared to the ones obtained in the preliminary research. It is found that the average of the final writing score obtained by the students increased in 16,4 points (range 0-100). The final writing score obtained in the preliminary research is 59,5 and increase into 75,9.

Furthermore, the average score for every writing aspect also gets improved. In terms of content aspect, the increase is three points (range 0-20). The average score of content aspect in the preliminary research is 13,2, while in the final task is 16,2. It is found in the students' works have improvements on the quantity (length) and the quality of the idea developments. Even though some students still miss some points in describing the assigned objects, the ideas they develop are complete.

In the aspect of the organization, the increase is 4,6 points (range 0-20). The average organization aspect score in the preliminary research is 9,9, while the final task is 14,4. The texts produced by the students are organized based on the generic structure of the descriptive text, and there are more connectives the students used to make the text more coherent. Lastly, in terms of language aspect, it is found that there is an increase in 0,6 points (range 0-10). The students use a wider range of vocabulary, and more appropriate grammar and word choices in their works.

In terms of content aspect, the average score obtained before the treatment is only 13,2 categorized as fair, while the average score obtained after the treatment is 16,2 categorized as good. Therefore, the content aspect score has increased in 3 points (range 0-20) and successfully improved from fair to good level. The students' content aspect improvement does not merely happen when they are producing the final task. Their progress could also be seen when they are making both group and individual work compositions. It is found that in those activities, there are improvements on the quantity (length) and the quality of the idea developments. Even though some students still miss some points in describing the assigned objects, the ideas they developed are complete.

The students have also got improved on the language aspect. The average score (range 0-10) of the language aspect obtained by the students in the preliminary study is only 6,6 categorized as fair and can increase 0,6 points into 7,3 categorized as good in the final task. In the group and individual activities, the students' progress on the language aspect could also be indicated. The students use a wider range of vocabulary, and more appropriate grammar and word choices.

Meanwhile, it is also found that every student can successfully increase his/her score in at least 10 points. There are only two out of 37 students (5,40%) who obtain the minimum point increase, while the other 35 students (94,6%) have successfully increased their writing scores in more than 10 points. It means that one of the criteria of success has been met.

The first meeting is used to deliver some fundamental knowledge about descriptive text and how to do clustering

and listing to generate the ideas, and how to use media weblogs. In the very beginning of time, the students are mostly quiet. However, when some exercises are given in the form of a PowerPoint presentation slide, the students start showing their active participation. The teacher-researcher has planned to ask the students to open the teacher-researchers weblog page in order to read the modeling text posted there. However, the number of laptops brought by the students that day is not adequate, so the students who do not bring laptop are given the example of the descriptive text printed on a piece of paper, and are shown the text through the use of LCD projector. The students read the text seriously, and some of them try to figure out the meaning of difficult words by using dictionary and internet.

After that, the teacher-researchers explain how to do clustering and listing. The students actively suggest the name of the objects being described, as well as their characteristics and the teacher-researchers, write down what the students mention into clusters and list. Moreover, then the students are delivered how to use weblogs as the media. The students pay attention, and some of them ask about the technical issues and work submission through weblogs.

In this meeting, the students start practicing making a descriptive text in groups. Firstly, the students open the teacher-researcher weblog page and see the picture about the rest area in Lamongan. In groups, they are asked to generate the ideas by making a list or drawing clusters on their paper or book. It seems that most of them prefer listing to cluster. The students look very busy and enthusiastic in discussing the topic and generating the ideas with their groups. When the teacher-researchers visit them to give supervision, many of them ask about how well they have generated the ideas. Having done with the generating ideas, all of the groups then develop the rough drafts based on the ideas they generate and post it on the leader's weblog page.

At the beginning of this meeting, the students are shown the samples of the groups' writing works to be discussed. When the discussion is conducted, most of the students actively try to identify the errors and give suggestions on how the errors should be revised. Some of them also give some questions regarding the use of grammar in descriptive text. After that, the students start producing the writing composition individually using the process writing and weblogs. Pre-writing and drafting stages are done in this meeting. The students open the teacher-researchers weblog page and generate the ideas based on the picture posted there. Similar to what has been found in the previous meeting, the students prefer using the listing to clustering.

The students are allowed to discuss the topic with their groups, and it seems that the students are very active and enthusiastic in giving ideas. Not few of the students also debate with their friends when they have different perspectives. Knowing that the teacher-researchers then supervise them to give and decide the better suggestion. In the drafting activity, the students who bring laptop are allowed to directly type the works, while the others are asked to write a draft on their books. At home, all students post the works and give comments to each other.

In this meeting, the students are asked to open their weblog pages and read the comments that have been given by their peers and the teacher-researchers. The teacher-researchers also have printed the feedback for those who cannot bring a laptop to school. For the students who do not post their works on the weblogs, the teacher-researchers then ask for their works and directly give them some feedback. After all, the students who have got the feedback,

then start to revise and edit their works. There are some of the students who do not understand the feedback; however, they bravely ask help from the teacher-researcher. Then the teacher-researcher walks around the class to supervise them.

As what has been known in the previous explanation that the students' scores get an increase in all kinds of writing aspects. It represents the improvement of the students' writing skill. It can happen due to some reasons. First, in the process writing activity, the teacher gives guidance to the students to compose better writing work. When the writing activity is done, the teacher-researchers always provide the supervision to the students regarding any difficulty they have. And the teacher-researchers also give an assist peer review through weblogs before the students revise and edit.

It is also found that all of the writing aspects, such as content, organization, and language get improved. It is due to the activity of pre-writing that the students do. The observation towards the assigned objects and idea generation make the students have a clear plan regarding what to write on the draft. The most significant improvement of students' writing works lies on the organization aspect which increases in 4,6 points. In the preliminary research, most of the students write their descriptive text in only a paragraph, and the connectives are also rarely used. While after the implementation, all students write their texts by arranging it based on the generic structure of the descriptive text and using more connectives. Consequently, their writings are more coherent and well-understood.

The improvement of the organization aspect is mostly caused by the fact that the students are given feedback and reminded to use more connectives and pay attention to the text arrangement in the revising and editing stages. So, the students are more aware of such aspect of the descriptive text. Furthermore, the activity of giving peer review through weblogs before doing revising and editing also makes the students more aware of not making mistakes. It is in line with what Harmer (2007) has said that peer review encourages the students to monitor each other, as a result, helps them to become better in self-monitoring. Meanwhile, the various appropriate comments are given by the students also indicate that the students have had a good understanding of the materials related to the descriptive text.

The students show their good attention and participation towards the learning activity. It can happen due to some reasons. Firstly, the students have various activities to do which do not make the learning activities monotonous. As the impact of implementing process writing strategy, the students are more challenged in doing the stages of process writing strategy. For instance, the pre-writing stage, in which the students have to generate the ideas, can empower them to think creatively. In doing this, the students are divided into several groups. Consequently, the students are very active in giving and debating the ideas in their groups. As what Brown (2007) has said, group works is an effective way to promote the students' motivation and participation in expressing the ideas.

Secondly, the teacher-researchers employ the technological teaching and learning aids during the class, such as the use of PowerPoint presentation in explaining the materials, and the weblog site to fulfil the writing process. This fact has approved what Foroutan, Noordin, and Hamzah (2013) have said that technology allows the students to engage in the attractive activities and enjoy the process of learning. Furthermore, since the existence of weblogs, it is found that the students enjoy posting their works on weblogs and decorating the weblog pages very

creatively. This fact is in line with what Kelley (2008) has said that the feature of weblogs which may be personalized can encourage the learner's spirit and motivation.

The students show their eagerness in giving peer feedback through comment box provided by weblogs. Giving feedback in such a new way makes them interested. Lin, Groom, and Lin (2013) point out that weblogs provide learners with an attractive feature that can enhance the opportunities to communicate with teachers and peers. The activity of giving feedback to each other also indicates that the students have high enthusiasm in doing every step of the learning procedure. Although they are outside the class, the students still show their willingness to get involved in giving peer feedback.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research and its discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of process writing strategy using weblogs can improve the ability of the X MIA 3 students of Senior High School Lamongan in writing a descriptive text. It is due to the fact that the students get prepared with the ideas to be developed and learned some vocabulary in the pre-writing stage. Besides, when the students are revising and editing their drafts, they can recognize what should be added and omitted towards their descriptive texts. Meanwhile, the group discussion regarding the assigned objects in the pre-writing stage and the implementation of media weblogs can make the students participate more actively when the learning procedure is implemented.

Lastly, the suggestions would like to be given to English teachers, educational institutions, and future researchers. For the English teachers, the strategy of process writing can be one of the alternatives to increase the students' writing ability. In order to make the class activity more attractive, and timesaving, the media weblogs can be employed to facilitate the students to do the stages in process writing.

For educational institutions, it is highly recommended that internet access and personal computers can be provided to facilitate the teaching-learning activities, so the media proposed in this research can be easily implemented by the teachers. The last is for future researchers. They may conduct further research related to the implementation of process writing strategy using weblogs in other genres of the texts and levels or semesters of the subjects.

However, this research is still limited to the writing of descriptive text and no further research to follow it up due to limited time and cost. Hence, for future research, the researchers hope that the other research on the same field can be conducted on the other kinds of text, such as narrative text, explanatory text, persuasive text, etc., and the other student's grades.

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