Improving the Students' Skill in Writing Hortatoryexposition Text by Optimizing the Useof Blog

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Abstract: Blog is a software application consisting of articles that enable people to record their thoughts and publish those diaries as web pages and usually published chronologically. The features on blog could be optimized to improve student's skill in writing. This article deals with a classroom action research using blog to encounter students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text in a high school in Gemolong, Sragen. The data were collected by using qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was collected through: observation, interview, research diary, photograph, and test. The quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptive statistical analysis. The research findings show that blog can improve students' skill in writing and class situation. Students' writing improved in terms of: (1) students could develop their idea; (2) organize their text according to the generic structure into a logical sequencing text; (3) used appropriate vocabulary; (4) wrote sentence grammatically correct; and (5) using correct spelling and punctuation. The improvement in classroom situation indicated by: 1) students visited other blog to get references about the topic; 2) had discussion with their groups or pair about the topic; 3) paid full attention to teacher's explanation; 4) became critical by commenting each other in their friends writings which posted on their blog; and 5) became more confident about their writing and excited when they posted their writing on blog. The result of the research is expected to be able to give some contributions for other teachers to apply blog as the media in teaching writing.

Keywords: *writing skill, hortatory exposition text, blog*

INTRODUCTION

In senior high school, students are required to be able to write some kind of texts such as: report, narrative, spoof, and also hortatory exposition. Hortatory exposition is one of the texts that should be mastered by the students. As stated in the curriculum, the standard competence of writing for SMA grade XI for the second semester is: "Expressing meaning into short functional text essay of hortatory exposition in daily life context". The minimum standard of learning competence for the second grade of Senior high school in Gemolong, Sragen is 75. The students who want to pass on each basic competence should be able to achieve 75 of the grade. In fact not all students are able to achieve the minimum standard of learning competence that has been decided by the school.

Based on the result of observation conducted in class XI.IPA1 at one of state senior high school in Sragen, there were some indicators of problem faced by the

students when they practiced writing as follows: (1) some of the students had difficulty in developing their ideas; (2) organizing the ideas; (3) writing using correct vocabulary; (4) writing sentence grammatically correct; and (5) using correct spelling and punctuation.

The class condition can be described as follows: (1) the students took a long time to arrange their ideas and start writing; (2) often chat with their friends; (3) did not give full attention to teacher; (4) played with their cell phone; and (5) did not have self-confidence towards their writings.

The indicators of problems above show that the students have low skill in writing. The factor caused the students had difficulty in writing was no media used by the teacher. Furthermore, students did not get any feedback after they submitted their writing to the teacher. This made the students not aware whether their writing is correct or not. When the learning situation couldnot attract the students' interest, it will affect the students'achievement in writing.

Kennedy (2003: 1) states that web publication gives students a real audience to write to and a collaborative environment where they can give and receive feedback. Educators can take advantage of the Web's publishing tools with limited time and resources and in keeping with the standards. Blog is part Web site, part journal, and part free-form writing space. Blogs have the potential to enhance writing and literacy skills while offering a uniquely stylized form of expression. That is why blog is suitable to be applied in the classroom since it can be the media where students post their writing on and get feedback or comment from both teacher and peer. As stated above that blog is a part of web site, therefore

students can get further information about the topic of the lesson to support their idea.

The writer believes that using blog as the media in teaching writing will become an interesting strategy to improve the students' skill in writing. By conducting a classroom action research that implements the use of blog, it is expected that the teacher is able to improve the students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text.

Based on the background of the study, the objectives are to describe whether or not blog can improve the students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text and the class climate during the teaching learning process by optimizing the use of blog at the students.

According to Byrne (1997: 1) writing is the act of forming symbols, that is letter or combination of letter. The symbols have to be arranged to form words and words have to be arranged to form sentences. To form a text, sentences have to be arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways. Writing involves the encoding of a message that is translating thoughts into message. We have to ensure that our writing can be understood by the reader. It is by the organization of sentences into a text. It can be said that writing is the process of forming symbols to translate thoughts into message. Tobe able to communicate successfully with the reader through the medium of writing, the organization of the text takes an important role. By a good organization, people will understand the content of our writing.

Imhoof and Hudson (1975: xii) state that writing is any organized, self-contained piece of writing written for a special purpose, often an assignment in class. It usually means a self-conscious process in which we make thoughtful decisions

concerning what to say, how to organize and develop ideas, and what words to use. From the statements, it can be said that writing is a process in which we have to make decision about the content of our writing, we also have to consider the organization by using correct vocabulary.

To communicate effectively through writing, there are several things that should be highlighted. As stated by Hedge (1988: 5) that effective writing requires a number of things such as a high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information, accuracy so that there is no ambiguity of meaning, the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis, careful choice of vocabulary and grammatical patterns, and sentence structure to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter.

Camilleri *et al.* (2007: 17) say that writing is considered to be a process which needs planning, drafting, revising and editing before the final publication. It becomes much easier if the teacher shows, supports, and helps students overcome their writing difficulties. Those statements are supported by Zamel in Richards and Freeman (1996: 97) that teacher should provide a supportive environment in the classroom, in which students are encouraged to work through their composing processes collaboratively. They should act not as assessors, but as facilitators who help students to develop strategies for generating ideas, revising and editing.

Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that writing is the process of translating thoughts into message by making decision about the content, considering the organization and using correct vocabulary. To communicate successfully through writing, it requires the use of complex

grammatical devices for focus and emphasis, grammatical patterns, and sentence structure to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter.

Camilleri *et al.* (2007: 8) point out that blog is of a special kind of website consisting of regular entries or posts arranged in reverse chronological order – that is with the most recent post at the top of the main page. Typically, each post is a short piece of text, though images are often included, and generally entries contain links to other websites. It is this feature that sets blogging apart from traditional journal writing.

Ahluwalia *et al.* (2011: 33) explains that blog is an online journal or a diarywhere every post is published chronologically. In addition, Stefanac in Moore (2013: 2) defines blog as an easy to update website characterized by dated entries displayed in reverse chronological order. Any person with basic computer skills and an internet connection can maintain a blog (Williams and Jacobs in Moore, 2013: 2).

According to Zeinstejer (1997: 1) blogs or "weblogs" are very easily-created personal websites containing posts which are regularly and frequently updated in the form of a diary or journal, showing the most recent posts at the top of the page. They can be run by one person or by a group of people who are invited to participate, and visitors can leave comments, thus creating a real space for discussion and collaboration. Blogs are archived, and access to these records of postings allows for consultation and research. Blogs also allow for the publication of links to other blogs, useful sites, photographs, images, audio and video. Educators from all over the world are taking advantage of this versatile tool to provide their students with the opportunity to

communicate in meaningful interactive situations with teachers and other students of the language from all over the planet.

Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that blog is an easily created online journal containing posts which are regularly and frequently updated and usually displayed in reverse time-based.

Blog can be used to teach writing skill in more communicative way as Johnson (2004: 1) says that blogs have been successfully implemented into journalism, political science, and various junior high to university English writing courses for native English speakers. However, the use of blogs in teaching EFL has much potential, especially in teaching written communication skill.

Kennedy (2003: 1) says her opinion about weblogs in teaching learning writing that web publication gives students areal audience to write to and, when optimized, a collaborative environment where they can give and receive feedback, mirroring the way professional writers use a workshop environment to hone theircraft. Golub in Kennedy (2003)says"Students will write when they have something to say, when they have an audience, and when they get feedback". It means that students will be more motivated to write if they have audience.

RESEARCH METHODS

The researcher carried out the classroom action research in one of state senior high school in Sragen The research is conducted in class eleventh.

The research method uses in this research is classroom action research. There are some definitions of action research. One of them is stated by Nunan, (1992: 2) who states that classroom action research is a process which involves: (1) defining a problem; (2) stating an objective; and (3) formulating a hypothesis. It involves gathering information, classification, analysis, and interpretation to see to what extent the initial objective has been achieved.

According to According to Cohen and Manion in Bell (1993: 6) action research is an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. The step-by-step process is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms such as questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies. Therefore the feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustments, directional changes, and redefinitions to bring about lasting benefits to the ongoing process itself.

In conducting an action research, there are some techniques that can be used to collect the data. In this research, the problem was about the low level of students' writing skill which need to be improved. Therefore, as the techniques of collecting the data, I carried out observation, interviews, took field notes, research diary, photographs, and tests to the students.(1) observation, I observed the classroom interaction to collect the information needed to teach writing; (2) I had interview the teacher and students to identify the problem and the source of the problem faced by the students in learning writing so that Ican decide the most appropriate media in solving the problem; (3) field notes to record the activities happened in the class. It is another way of collecting information about classroom events, teaching learning process and the students' behavior; (4) research diary to record the detail activities of the researcher from the beginning up to the end of the

research; (5) photographs, the implementation of this research was also recorded in photographs to provide more data; and (6) test to make sure whether there was an improvement of the students' skill in writing, it was given in the end of cycle One and cycle Two. After giving the test, I analyzed the result of the test by scoring it. Then, I found the mean score.

The data which I collected were analyzed by qualitative and quantitative ways. Meanwhile, the quantitative approach is done by describing the tests results.(1) Qualitative data, it is used to analyze the data that are taken during the teaching learning process. The qualitative data was analyzed by interactive model analysis. Miles and Huberman (1992: 20) explain that analysis consists of three stages of processes which happened collaboratively. Those are: (a) reducing the data is a process of sharpening, grouping, categorizing, deleting the unimportant and organizing the data in such a way to gain and verify the final conclusion; (b) displaying the data is a stage in which the researcher makes conclusion and takes decision based on the information gathered; (c) making conclusion, the data that has been gathered have to be verified so that the researcher can draw conclusion. (2) Quantitative Data, it is used to analyze data from the result of the teaching learning process. The quantitative data of this research was analyzed by using descriptive statistic analysis. As stated by Djarwanto (2001: 43) that descriptive statistic is a part of statistical knowledge which studying about the way of collecting, recording, organizing, and drawing the research data in the form of table frequency or graphic and then counting the statistic score such as mean, median, modus, standard deviation and others. The quantitative data is used to

compare the students' writing skill before and after the action or the result of pre-test and post-test.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher conducted pre-observation before the action research implementation to know the condition of class XI IPA 1. It was done by distributing questionnaire, doing observation and providing pre-test. Based on the observation and the pre-test, it was identified that the studens' skill in writing should be improved. The researcher used blog as the media to teach writing. It was used as the media to post students' writing, interact with other students, and to find other resources to support their writing.

After finding the problems by the observation, pre-test, and using questionnaires, the researcher made a plan to teach writing in cycle 1. It was planned to have fourmeetings and was conducted twotimes a week.

The researcher did reflection after analyzing the observation result in the cycle one. Taken from the result of the observation, there were found some improvements on the students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text. It could be seen by comparing the result of the pre-test and post-test during the implementation of the action. The mean score of the post-test result done at the end of the cycle one was72.04. It was better than the mean score of the pre-test which was 62.98. Besides there were also some improvements in the students' attitude toward writing lesson. The students were more enthusiastic in writing. They also paid more attention to teacher.

Based on the result of the first cycle, the researcher realized that there were

improvements of the students' skill in writing, but the researcher still found some problems faced by the students. Therefore, the researcher revised her plans. The revised plan was about giving more practices on pronoun and internal conjunction. One way of overcoming the unpredictable connection was preparing tasks which could be conducted offline.

After observing the teaching learning process in the second cycle, it was assumed that the teaching learning process by optimizing the use of blog ran well. The result of post-test showed that there was improvement towards students' skill in writing hortatory text. The mean score of post test 2 was 79.81 and the mean score of post test 1 was 72,04. There were 91 % of students obtained the score above the passing grade which was 75. In detail, the students' achievement of each writing aspects in pre-test, test 1, and test 2 can be seen in the table 1.

Table 1 The Students' Score in Pre-test, Test 1, and Test 2

No	Aspects	Score		
		Pre-test	Test 1	Test 2
1	content	19.10	22.98	24.25
2	organization	13.48	14.78	15.98
3	vocabulary	13.56	15.18	16.55
4	language Use	13.64	15.32	18.99
5	mechanics	3.14	3.76	4.04
	Total Score	62.93	72.04	79.81

Based on the results of cycle 1 and cycle 2, it could be seen that the using of blog in teaching writing gave its contribution towards the students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text. Those findings are as follows: (1) blog can improve students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text; and (2) blog improves classroom situation.

Blog that is implemented by the researcher during teaching and learning process could improve the students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text. These improvements are; (1) students could develop their idea into a good text; (2) could organize their text according to the generic structure into a logical sequencing text; (3) used appropriate vocabulary; (4) wrote sentences grammatically; and (5) wrote using correct spelling and punctuation. These findings are supported by the research result stated in pre-test and post-tests that there is improvements of students' score that higher than the passing grade which is 75.

The finding of this research shows that the students could develop their idea because they were allowed to search any information to support their ideas. Before blog was implemented, students took longer time to start writing because they said that they had no idea to start writing. Students felt that it became easier to start writing because they could get much information related to the topic given.

Kennedy (2003: 4) explained that self-publishing in students' blogs encourages ownership and responsibility for content. Similarly, Richardson in Kennedy (2003: 3) state that discussion tool is the most helpful feature in Web log, noting that the online interaction provided students anopportunity to articulate their ideas in ways they haven't

been asked to before. It means that students really have to understand what they write, so that they can explain it to their reader. Based on the statement, blog is emphasized in content to attract the readers to read.

Richardson in Camilleri, et al. (2007: 9) says, "Blogging is not just writing in a blog. It is much more than that. The process starts with reading what other people have written and editing that content for depth, relevance, and accuracy. It's making connections about that content to other ideas (organization) to clarify what is important about it". It can be concluded that blog is making connection between content and ideas (organization).

Students sometimes confused about the using of appropriate word. They sometimes used word which is not suitable with the context. The translator feature on internet is really helpful, because while students type their writing on their blog and found difficulties about vocabulary, they could consult it to Google translator. Dalton and Grisham (2011: 306) in their article say that digital tools and media are available in most schools that teachers could harness now to improve vocabulary learning.

Richardson in Hourigan and Muray (2010: 210) says that learning together in collaborative spaces where people negotiate and construct meaning and texts improve language use". By using blog as media to post students writing, they could do peer correction by commenting each other. This will make them become critical and also improve their skill in language use.

Pennington in Warschauer (2010: 3) explained that new digital media have played an important role in the teaching of writing, through both the cognitive era that began in the 1980s, in which word processing was emphasized as a tool for revision, and the sociocognitive era that began in the 1990s, in which computer-mediated communication was emphasized as a tool of social construction of meaning (Kern & Warschauer, 2000) The revision here belongs to mechanics correction from the blog itself. It has a purpose to make students have better understanding in using mechanics.

In conclusion, the use of blog was able to improve students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text. As stated by Campbell (2003: 2) in his journal that in English as second language classes, learner blogs may be best suited for reading and writing classes. Blogs can be used as journals for writing practice, or as free-form templates for personal expression. The idea here is that students can get writing practice, develop a sense of ownership, and get experience with the practical, legal, and ethical issues of creating a hypertext document. In addition, whatever they write can instantly be read by anyone else and, due to the comment features of the software, further exchange of ideas is promoted.

The research findings also show that using blog as the media in teaching writing was able to improve classroom situation. It can be seen as follows: (1) students visited other blog to get references; (2) had discussion with their groups or pair about the topic; (3) paid full attention to teacher's explanation; (4) became critical by commenting each other in their friends writings which posted on their blog; (5) became more confident about their writing and excited when they posted their writing on blog. The classroom situation was improved since all students were allowed to search any information from the internet to support their idea. It made students work faster and not confuse about what to write.

These findings are supported by Morris (2013: 2) that creating a group blog requires teamwork and collaboration. Students and teacher learn and share together. A real sense of classroom community can be developed through blogging and establishing a group identity.

Since the using of blog was new for students, they paid full attention to teacher. They listened to teacher's instruction and sometimes asked about their difficulty about blog or the topic. Besides, the implementation of blog made students used their gadget in a positive way. Morris also explained that blogging assist students to become more ICT literate. Through blogging, students are able to discuss many ICT skills such as keyboard shortcut, researching online and troubleshooting.

Using blog also made students become more confident about their writing as stated by Morris (2013: 2) that in the traditional classroom, the only audience of students work was teacher and sometimes classmates. Blog provide a much larger audience of students work and an avenue for feedback and self improvement through commenting. Students take pride in the work that goes on the blog and want to do their best for their potential audience.

Johnston (2002: 5) states that publishing work online enables students to make contribution to the class promotes peer learning and encourages quality in work. Besides, since the students accessed blog inside and outside the class, it showed that their interest in writing improved.

In conclusion, the implementation of blog had improved the classroom situation. They were all excited to use blog as the media to post their writing after knowing that their writing would be visible to public. It made them worked their best to compose a good writing by searching any information to support their data. Besides, the comment feature on blog made the classroom situation better. They commented on their friends' writing and gave praise each other.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

There are two conclusions that can be drawn from the result of the research. First, the use of students' blog to teach writing improves students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text

The statements above were supported by the result of students' mean score in the post-test 2, which was 78, 81. This score was above the school passing grade which was 75.the result of students' writing showed improvement since the first post-test. The students' mean score in post-test 1was 73, 03 and 62, 98 in the pre-test.

The second conclusion that can be drawn is that the use of blog in writing class had improved the classroom situation. The students paid full attention to teacher. The actively involved by collaboratively worked with their group in writing group blog post. Since they were realized that their writings would be visible to public, they were encouraged to write better. The students were also encouraged to be critical by doing peer correcting. Besides, the use of students' blog gave them ownership feeling to show their identity and this improved their confidence.

Finally, the use of students' blog in teaching writing was having a positive result. It can be concluded that the use of students' blog in teaching learning process improved the students' skill in writing hortatory exposition text and the classroom situation at that school.

Based on the conclusion there are some suggestions to improve the students'

skill in writing. 1) The use of appropriate media will improve the students' skill and motivation in writing. Students' blog can be used by the teacher as the media in teaching writing. Therefore they were encouraged to write better. 2) Students should have more practices in writing. They should motivate themselves to practice writing as a habit. The students' blog can be a media where they can practice writing inside or outside the class. 3) The institution as the place to have knowledge and education should provide facilities that enable the teacher and students to access internet and apply blog in teaching and learning writing.

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