

# DEVELOPING STUDENTS' WRITING AND DIGITAL LITERACY USING WEBLOG AT TRIDINANTI UNIVERSITY OF PALEMBANG

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## Abstract

This research was aimed at investigating the development of students' writing and digital literacy through weblog. The sample of the study was 20 students of the fourth semester English study program of Tridianti University Palembang. The researchers used purposive sampling as the way of choosing the sample because the sample is taught by the researchers in writing class. The researchers applied quasi-experimental design in term of pretest-posttest non equivalent group design. Moreover, there are three types of data collection used by the researchers; they are test, questionnaire and observation. After the study, it was found out that the results of posttest between experiment and control group show significant difference with t value of posttest was 11.739, sig 0.000 while t value of gain score was 7.671, sig 0.000. Accordingly, all aspects of writing both posttest and gain score show significant differences. Furthermore, it was also found that the developments of digital literacy components from the highest to the lowest are as follows: 1) information sources (36%), 2) digital competencies (23%), 3) attitude and perspective (24%), and 4) basic ICT skill (17%). As the results, this research reveals that weblog is effective to develop students' writing and digital literacy. In addition, students showed positive views because using blog was very interesting and it provided more cooperation between lecturer and students.

**Keywords:** Weblog, Writing and Digital Literacy

## INTRODUCTION

Today, we live in a dynamic digital world where both educators and students are challenged with the ever changing technological developments. As a result, there is a growing need for developing the digital skills, especially for English literacy skill as a basic requirement for the students' academic and professional advancement. In Indonesia, EFL literacy of Indonesian students is still low. Diem (2011) reveals that English literacy achievement of the students is still below the standard score. This study finds out that mean score of students' English literacy in South Sumatera was 54.77. Moreover, insufficient exposure to English also contributes to students' poor performance in English writing literacy skill. As the result, many non-standard sentences commonly appear in most of Indonesian students' scientific writing as they are affected by local languages and various forms of other nonstandard language usage (Kholiq & Ningsih, 2011). Moreover, Alfaki (2015) reveals that university students have various writing problems; they are language problems at the levels of morphology and syntax; usage errors, and mechanical mistakes, that is, spelling, punctuation and capitalization, lack of several writing development skills, cognitive problems and graph motor problems.

Based on some problems above, this study focused on report text. Gerrot and Wignell (1994:196-197) state that report is a text which functions to describe the way things are, with reference to a range of natural, manmade and social phenomena in our environment. A report presents information about a subject. It is a result of an observation and analysis. Within writing report text, students have to write something decent to report by researching and analyzing something.

Moreover, an abundance of information resources available on the web is mostly found in English. It becomes invaluable treasure to solve some literacy learning problems. These collections of information sources are accessible via computers. Therefore, in this digital information era, students need to possess digital literacy skill and one of them is weblog. According to Pinkman (2005) blogs can provide interesting, authentic and communicative resources that can serve a variety of purposes in language classroom and they can also be used to encourage interaction among students and between teachers and students (Yang, 2009).

Furthermore, Kohsamut and Sucaromana (2017) reveal that students significantly performed better scores on English writing ability after being taught through blog. Through weblog, learners have the opportunity to read other learners' posts and comment or add some materials to the existing articles. This interaction makes students motivated in learning, while provides a competition for learning with other learners. Since the Internet is the only place that users can access to different sources and skills simultaneously, it is observed that students can improve their language learning (Noytim, 2010).

Furthermore, some previous studies agree that weblog was effective to motivate students to write and change classroom environment. (Wu, 2006). Mynard (2007) also said that the implementation of blogging strategy in writing class could be a tool to encourage students to reflect on their learning). Blogs are considered powerful and useful if the use is maximized to meet teachers' and students' needs. The benefits are obvious for the teachers of EFL as well as for the students who want to enhance their performance in the English language skills and components, especially writing. Additionally, Huffaker (2004) explains that learners can gather in one site of weblog site where ideas are shared, questions are asked and answered, and social cohesion is developed. Those activities create collaborative learning among students. Besides, a case study conducted by Jun and Pow (2011) find out that web- based learning was useful in involving students in digital literacy practices.

Therefore, the researchers would like to find out if using Weblog will affect students' writing and digital literacy. For this reason, based on all the description above, the researchers are interested in conducting the research which discusses "Developing Students' Writing and Digital Literacy Using Weblog at Tridinanti University of Palembang."

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the researchers used quasi-experimental design in term of pretest-posttest non equivalent group design. The students of experimental group got the treatment intensively by using weblog for 10 meetings so that there were 20 meetings in this study including pretest and posttest. Each of which consisted of 2x50 minutes. It took two teaching period for each meeting due to various goals that need to be achieved. Besides, it was more conducive to complete the whole learning procedures of this strategy within 100 minutes in each meeting.

In collecting the data, there was three data collection. They were test, questionnaire and observation. For writing test, students asked to write a paragraph of report text for writing literacy test in both pretest and posttest to identify the progress made by students before and after the study. There were seven aspects measured. They were (1) tone, (2)

opening sentence, (3) supporting sentences, (4) closing sentence, (5) organization ideas, (6) vocabulary or word usage, and (7) spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Meanwhile, to measure students' digital literacy improvement. Therefore, the questionnaire was given twice; in pretest and posttest in experiment and control group.

Moreover, In order to obtain clear information about the students' digital literacy progress, observation was done by the researchers themselves during the intervention in experimental group. It was needed to report more specific information about daily progress in all components of digital literacy skill. Therefore, checklists used for observation guideline were similar to digital literacy questionnaire items.

The data analyses were taken from the tests. In analyzing the data of students' writing and digital literacy achievements, the rubrics were used and the writer used the Paired Samples T-test in which the data were analyzed by SPSS program. It was used to know the significant difference between pretest and posttest for each group, the Independent Samples T-test was applied to know the significant difference between the two groups.

The results of writing tests were calculated using scoring system ranged 0 to 100. Then, they were categorized based on levels of achievement using score interval as Table 1:

Table 1: Students' Scoring System

Score Interval	Category
86 -100	Verygood
71 -85	Good
56 -70	Average
41 -55	Poor
0 – 40	Verypoor

Meanwhile, scoring rubric was used to measure the improvement of digital literacy through observation. The observation scoring rubric is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Observation Scoring Rubric

Score Range	Category	Explanation
4	Excellent	Confident and need no support or training
3	Good	Workable knowledge, but need more practice
2	Poor	Small amount of knowledge, but not confident, improvement needed
1	Failed	No knowledge of this area

In relation to pursuing a high degree of content validity, the researchers used tests to measure the students' writing and digital literacy achievements. In order to know whether the topic of writing tests given were valid; the researcher formulated the topic for writing

tests by considering English textbook used by the concerned lecturer. Meanwhile, in order to figure out the reliability of the test, inter-rater reliability was used.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **2.1 Writing Literacy**

In writing literacy, the mean difference was 30.10,  $t$  value = -13.961, and sig. = 0.000. Compared with control group, it had not made significant improvement with mean difference only 4.23,  $t$  value = 1.627, and sig. = 0.120. Then, for seven aspects of writing, experiment group also show significant improvement in all aspects with the order from the highest to lowest results as follows: (1) closing sentence; mean difference = 46.25, (2) Tone; mean difference = 32.50, (3) opening sentence; mean difference = 29.38, (4) supporting sentences; mean difference = 28.75, (5) organization idea; mean difference = 26.88, (6) vocabulary or word usage; mean difference = 21.88, and (7) spelling, capitalization and punctuation; mean difference = 19.38.

But in control group, improvement only occurred for closing sentence with mean difference = 12.70, while other 6 aspects did not. The score of mean difference of those aspects were explained respectively: for supporting sentences and vocabulary or word usage were 5.15, organization idea was 2.55, for opening sentence and spelling, capitalization and punctuation were 1.95, and tone was 1.25.

Besides, the results of posttest and gain score between experiment and control group show significant difference with  $t$  value of posttest was 11.739, sig 0.000 while  $t$  value of gain score was 7.671, sig 0.000. Accordingly, all aspects of writing both posttest and gain score show significant differences.

### **2.2 Digital Literacy**

From the result of digital literacy questionnaire, it was found out that digital literacy of experiment group show significant improvement with mean difference 14.27,  $t$  value = - 6.297, sig. = 0.000. It is different from control group which did not make any significant improvement because the mean difference score was only 0.78 with  $t$  value = - 0.499 and sig. 0.623. Meanwhile, the aspects of digital literacy of the experiment group had the highest significant improvement in information sources with mean difference 30.00, the second was digital competence with mean difference 19.88, the third was attitude and perspective with mean difference 17.29, at last it was basic ICT skill with mean difference 11.29. Meanwhile, those aspects did not significantly improve in control group because mean difference achieved by the students were very low. Mean difference of digital competence was 3.86, mean difference of basic ICT skill was 0.79, mean difference of information sources was -1.25 and mean difference between experiment and control group in terms of the posttest result with  $t$  obtained = 4.931 and sig. 0.000 and gain score with  $t$  value = 4.839 and sig0.000.

### **2.3 Observation Results**

During the study, the students in experiment group were observed while they were doing digital learning practices. There were 4 components which were observed; 1) basic ICT skill, 2) information sources, 3) digital competencies, and 4) attitude and perspective. For basic ICT skill, it was observed while the students were operating their ICT tools (computer, laptop, mobile phone or tablet). Meanwhile, information sources and digital

competencies were observed from the results of the students' work which were posted on the blog. Then, their attitude and perspective about digital learning were observed from the students' response to the giventask.

As a whole, students made progress for all items of the four digital literacy components. It can be seen from excellent and good category which increased from observation 1 to observation 3.

At the beginning of the study, there was very small number of the students who were in excellent and failed category. Most of them were in good and poor category. In the middle of the process, failed and poor category decreased and vice versa good and excellent category increased. Then, at the end of the study, none of the students was in failed category anymore, only few students (5%-15%) in few items were in poor category, around 50% students in all components had good category, above 50% students in some items were in excellent category.

In addition, when the results were seen in detail, the highest progress made by the students from the observation results was in students' basic ICT skill then followed by digital competencies because the number of the students who were in excellent category was almost or closely above 50% for these two components. Meanwhile, though attitude & perspective and information sources also increased still they were not as high as other two components as there was only small number of the students who were in excellent category.

## 2.4 Discussion

In accordance with the above findings, based on the results of the descriptive analyses, the condition of English writing literacy and digital literacy achievements were in good level. However, the statistical analyses show that the students of experiment group made significant improvement in each literacy skills while the students of control group did not. Furthermore, there were significant differences in terms of posttest and gain score between experiment and control group.

From the result of test, it can be concluded that that weblog is effective to develop students' writing skill, it is in accordance with the research done by Alsubaie and Madini (2018), in their research, they concluded that there were some improvement in the students' writing performance and contribute to the extension of the students' vocabulary knowledge. Besides, the improvements in all aspects of writing indicate that writing performance of the students in this study was getting better. In each meeting, students tend to upload better post on their blogs before revising by others. As the result, the quality of the content also developed well.

In detail, the order from the highest to the lowest development is as follows: 1) closing sentence (23%), 2) tone (16%), 3) opening sentence (14%), 4) supporting sentences (14%), 5) organization idea (13%), 6) vocabulary or diction (11%), and 7) spelling, capitalization and punctuation (9%). The results reveal that during writing process, students tend to be more focus on the content of their writing than mechanics like spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

Meanwhile, the result from questionnaire and observation show that digital literacy skill of experiment students significantly developed. It means that weblog is not only successful in developing students' ability using digital tool properly but also appropriate to develop their ICT skill, increase the knowledge about getting information sources, enhance their digital competence and build positive attitude and perspective about digital usage and transformation.

The development of digital literacy components from the highest to the lowest are as follows: 1) information sources (36%), 2) digital competencies (23%), 3) attitude and perspective (24%), and 4) basic ICT skill (17%). The results indicate that the concept of digital library in this study encouraged students' knowledge about information sources.

Knowing collections of information which are free and accessible via internet very beneficial EFL learners to be exposed to learning materials which relevant to the real situation of target language.

## CONCLUSION

This research reveals that there was significant difference in writing literacy between the students who were taught by using weblog and those who were not. Furthermore, writing had the highest significant development among other variables. It means that weblog is appropriate to improve writing literacy. Besides, weblog is also effective to improve digital literacy as it was found that there was significant improvement of the students who were taught by using weblog as well as its all aspects. Besides, those improvements were significantly different from the students who were not taught by using.

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