

The Effect of Using Blended Learning Strategy toward the 8 Grade Students' Writing Competency

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Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating whether or not there was significant difference in writing competency between students who were taught by using blended learning and those who were taught by using conventional strategy. The research design used in this study was *Post-test Only Control Group Design*. The population in this study was eight grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Singaraja and the samples of study were selected by using Cluster Random Sampling. Class VIII A8 was assigned as the experimental group which was taught by using "blended learning" and class VIII A7 as the control group which was taught by using "conventional strategy". The result of the data analysis showed that students in the experimental group performed better than the students in the control group. It was proven by the result of the descriptive statistics that showed the mean score of the experimental group was 84.75 while the mean score of the control group was 76.75. The result of the t-test also showed that the value of the t_{ob} was higher than the t_{cv} . The value of the t_{ob} was -6.379, while the value of the t_{cv} was 1.6736 ($\alpha = 0.5$). It means that there was a significant difference on writing competency between the students who were taught by using blended learning strategy and those who were taught by using conventional strategy.

Keywords: blended learning, conventional strategy, writing competency

Introduction

English in Indonesia is spoken as a foreign language. People use English for specific purposes only. To be defined as a good English speaker, there are four major skills that should be mastered by people namely: listening, reading, writing and speaking in order to do a complete English communication. Since English is a foreign language, therefore, approach, methods and strategy of implementing TEFL is really important.

Writing is one of four major skills requires a special intention since it is a productive skill. Writing has some important roles in conveying ideas and concept. It is a necessary thing in everyday lives such in business, creativity, and in scholarly pursuits.

Since writing is taught from earlier stage of learning in Indonesia, teachers need to implement effective teaching strategies in order to make the students able to convey their ideas and concept through writing. During the last couple of years, researchers and teachers are trying to find the best way to teach writing besides the existing strategies, approaches, methods, procedures, and techniques that has been used in the recent years.

Oshima and Hogue (2000:3) state that writing takes study and practice to develop the writing skill. For both native speakers and new learners of English, it is important to note that writing is a process, not a "Product". Surely, the process of writing is started from forming ideas and concept into words onto the highest element in writing that is a paragraph. The paragraphs are combined until forming a product of writing in the form of narrative, report, procedure etc.

In addition, Nunan (2000:88) defined that writing is the process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express an idea into a good writing, and arranging the ideas into statement and paragraph clearly. It indicates that the learners are expected to explore the ideas and make them into good paragraph. Besides, writing is both a physical and a mental act. It is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium, whether it is an object or a symbols or an email message.

From the observation in SMP N 1 Singaraja, it was found that the students still have difficulties in writing. One of the example is they cannot produce a single paragraph by

themselves. They still need assisted by their teachers. Some students could make a paragraph but it was not 100% correct. It was found that the students made mistakes in grammar and punctuation. They also said that they have lack of vocabulary that makes them difficult to form a sentence or paragraph. The teacher used conventional strategy which was teacher center learning. The students were so passive. They only listen to their teacher explanation.

Currently, the teaching of the English language will not be maximal with the use of conventional methods only. The conventional teaching methods that are still being used: lecturing method and book oriented. In the 2013 curriculum, all subjects must integrate ICT-based including English subject. This is a very interesting challenge for teachers to start implementing ICT during the learning process. Teachers are also expected to be more innovative in strategies, approaches, methods, procedures, and techniques specifically in teaching writing. This curriculum development is of course influenced by the development of ICT.

The comparison between conventional teaching strategy with modern teaching strategy can be seen as follows:

Table 1. The comparison between conventional teaching strategy with modern teaching strategy

Difference	Conventional Teaching	Modern Teaching
1. The role of teacher	Teacher is the prime controller in the classroom. (<i>teacher-centered</i>)	Teacher is the facilitator in the classroom activity. (<i>student-centered</i>)
2. The role of students	The students are passive in the classroom activity. They are merely listening to the teacher's explanation about the lesson.	The students are actively participating in the classroom activity. They are involving in the classroom discussion.
3. The role of language	It is emphasizing on the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary items.	It is emphasizing on strengthening the knowledge of 4 language skills while grammar and other language components are learnt in integrative way.
4. The method used	Grammar Translation Method : Teaching rules and translation.	Communicative Language Teaching: Teaching how to communicate.
5. The activities	Memorizing, translating, drilling, repeating and applying.	Listening to the audio, practice their speech through role play, reading the passage, composing their writing.
6. Focus	Memorizing the pattern and vocabularies items.	Improving language skills and components.

Adapted from (Sayukti,2015:31)

Today, it cannot be denied that people are living in ICT era. For instances: internet, gadget and telephone. Those things can't be separated from people's life. The term "technology" refers to a development in methods and tools that we use to solve problems or achieve goals and even for learning as well. According to Dang, et al (2011:1), ICT has experienced fast development worldwide since the 1980s and has become an integral part in nearly all aspects of people's life. The development of ICT is also affecting our education. As stated by Herendita (2013:41), the development of ICT has rapidly affected some aspects in Indonesia especially in education field.

Isisag (2012:1) stated that there have been much debates over the use of computers and the internet in foreign language teaching such: techniques offered, the activities and syllabus alongside technology development. One of the examples is using internet to teach in classroom. In a relation, Bouhnik and Carmi (2012:2), higher education institution began

incorporating the internet as an alternative study environment in two decades. New advances in the internet based technology have brought challenges and opportunities as well to education and training, in particular through online instruction. Based on research that was reported by Schacter (1999:9), students who used computer-based instruction experienced positive effects on achievement in all major subject area.

Singh and Reed (2001:1) stated that traditional physical classrooms have been the dominant form of knowledge transfer for at least 3,000 years. Even today, nearly 80% of corporate training is conducted in the classroom. The last universal technology in learning, the printed book, is over 500 years old. One example of the application of internet in teaching is conducting a virtual classroom (E-learning). E-learning gives a new learning style and environment because the learning can be happening anywhere for example in the home, library or any other public area as long as the internet is available. According to Akkoyunlu and Soylu (2008:184), the most significant characteristics of e-learning are the teacher and the learners are in different physical environments and the communication throughout the teaching/learning process is carried out via e-mail, forums through the internet. On the other hand, traditional classroom learning cannot be abandoned even this method keeps students sit passively and listen to the lecture given by the teacher. Indeed, students may feel bored during the learning process. However, e-learning has its own weaknesses. As claimed by Serlin (2005:9), academic dishonesty and no face-to-face meetings are major weaknesses of e-learning.

The way to overcome this problem is conducting Blended Learning. This method mixes a classroom learning or face-to-face learning with virtual learning (on-line learning). Blended learning according to Saliba (2013:4) is a strategic and systematic approach to combining times and modes of learning, integrating the best aspects of face-to-face and online interactions for each discipline, using appropriate ICTs.

Definition of blended learning i.e. “a hybrid of traditional face-to-face and online learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and online, and where the online component becomes a natural extension of traditional classroom learning” In addition, Bath and Bourke (2010:1) claims that blended learning is about effectively integrating ICTs into course design to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for students and teachers by enabling them to engage in ways that would not normally be available or effective in their usual environment, whether it is primarily face-to-face or distance mode. In many cases the act of “blending” achieves better student experiences and outcomes, and more efficient teaching and course management practices. It can involve a mix of delivery modes, teaching approaches and learning styles. Simply, Blended learning is a combination of two models of learning (face-to-face and virtual) with the use of appropriate ICT to create a new learning environment with the aim of achieving better experiences and outcomes.

The viewpoints and discussions mentioned above, supporting on developing strategy, approach, method, procedure, and technique to teach writing and develop students’ writing skill and introducing ICT-based learning and the importance of it.

This study was aimed to find the significant effect of blended learning strategy towards the 8 grade students’ writing competence in Smp N 1 Singaraja in academic year of 2015/2016.

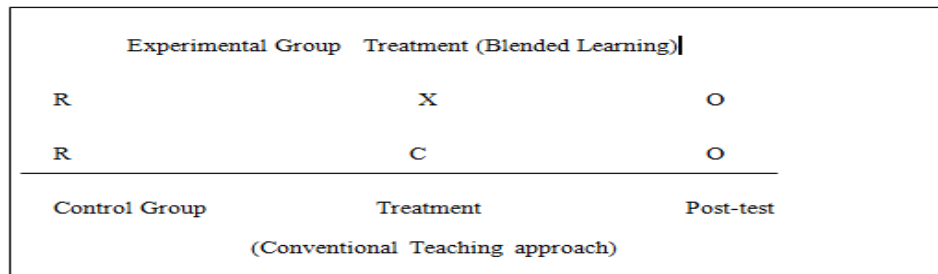
Methods

The research design in this study is one kind of experimental design called Post-test Only Control Group Design. The design involves an experimental group and control group which was formed by cluster random sampling. The experimental group was taught by using blended learning, while the control group was taught by conventional strategy. The groups

were measured by conducting a post-test after the treatment has been applied. Further, the result of the post-test was used as the data.

Findings and Discussions

Findings



Note:

R : Random selection

X : Experimental group (will be taught by using Blended learning)

Figure 1. Research Design

The population of this study was the eighth grade students of SMP N 1 Singaraja in academic year of 2015/2016. The total numbers of the population were 255 students consisting of 9 classes. After deciding the population of the group, two samples were selected in order to gather the data by using Cluster Random Sampling Technique. In this technique, some lotteries would be used. Then, two lotteries were taken randomly to get two classes that would be categorized as a control and experimental group. Two classes that would be categorized into experimental group and control group are VIII A and VIII A. Both groups consisted of 28 students.

Before the treatment was conducted in classes, normality and homogeneity were measured. Normality test and homogeneity test functioned to qualify the samples. To establish it, the students' writing score were collected and then analyzed in SPSS 22.0. Students' latest writing score was used in order to test the normality and homogeneity of class VIII A8 and VIII A7. The result of normality and homogeneity can be seen below.

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Control	.133	28	.200*	.946	28	.156
Experime	.107	28	.200*	.952	28	.226

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Figure 2. Normality Test

The table shows that the significance value (.sig) of the two groups are .200 and .200. Since the significance value of both groups in the column of Kolmogorov -Smirnova has exceeded the significant value of α (0.05), in other words, the samples are distributed normally.

At the same time, Levene's test was conducted to find the homogeneity of the samples. The result can be seen below

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
value experiment	28	81.6786	2.49523	.47155
control	28	81.7500	2.20479	.41667

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.244	1	54	.270

Figure 3. Homogeneity Test

The tables tell about descriptive information of the samples such as mean score and standard deviation of the samples' score. Meanwhile the table of Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances indicates the value of F is 1.244 in which the numerator of degree of freedom (*df1*) is 1, denominator of degree of freedom (*df2*) is 54 and significant value (Sig.) was 0.270 with the value of *α* is 0.05. Since the significant value (Sig.) is 0.270, it exceeds the value of (0.05), thereby the samples are considered as homogeneous.

Based on those normality test and homogeneity test, the result revealed that the two classes chosen to be samples of this study were homogeneous and they were also distributed normally. Therefore, the samples were accepted to be used in this study.

The treatment was conducted on March 28th, March 31st, April 4th, April 7th, April 11th, and April 14th, 2016 for the class VIII A8 as the experimental group. This class consisted of 28 students. For the VIII A7 class as the control group, the conventional teaching was conducted on 29th March, 30th March, 5th April, 6th April, 12th April and 13th April 2016. The students in experimental group were taught using Blended Learning Strategy in writing recount text. The mechanism of learning activity was varied from class discussion, and independent work. Mostly, students learnt individually. All activities in the treatment had purpose to investigate the effect of Blended Learning strategy on the students' recount text achievement.

The post test was conducted after the treatment given. The researcher decided to conduct a post-test according to the activities that the students did during 3 days of holiday. After conducting a post-test, the researcher analyzed the data. The first step was testing the normality and homogeneity of the data.

The content validity in this research was determined by experts' judgments. The experts are the English teacher in SMP N 1 Singaraja (I Gede Wimi Suputra, M.Pd and Drs. Andang Kinaryo Adji). From the Gregory's Formula, it was found that the content validity of the form of test was 1.0 which was the highest amount of validity. It means that the instruments were valid to be used to give treatments as well as to measure writing competency.

Meanwhile, in order to check the reliability of the instruments, a try out test in class VIII A5 would be done. The result of the try-out was evaluated by using writing scoring rubric. In evaluating students' writing competency, there were two raters (English teacher in this

school) who gave the score. Then, try out scores would be analyzed by using inter-rater reliability. The calculation showed the inter-rater reliability (r_{xx}) of the current data was 0.871 with the value of alpha 0.931. It indicated that the accuracy of inter-rater reliability was high.

As stated previously, the result of post-test from two groups were analyzed in two phase. The data would analyze by using descriptive statistics analysis and inferential statistics analysis. The result of the descriptive statistics analysis showed different score between students in experimental group with the students in control group. The median of the groups are different.

The median or the midpoint of the experimental group is 84.50, while control group is 75.50. The most frequent score in the data distribution of the experimental group is 82 which occur five times in the data distribution. Meanwhile, the mode in control group is 74 which appear four times in the data distribution. In addition, The range indicates the distance of the maximum score with the minimum score obtained in each group. For the experimental group, the maximum score is 94 and the minimum score is 77, thereby its range is 17. In contrast, the maximum score in the control group was 88 but the minimum score is 70. Thus the range is 18. In conclusion, the groups have different range.

Standard deviation could be defined as the square root of the variance which is commonly abbreviated as s . Standard deviation for experimental group is 4.632 while for the control group is 4.727 and the variance of the experimental group is 21.454 meanwhile the variance of the control group is 22.343

After conducting descriptive analysis, the data was analyzed by using inferential statistical analysis such normality and homogeneity test and hypothesis testing.

The result showed that the data were normally distributed and homogenous. The significance value of the control group is .141 and the experimental is .200 in Kolmogorov-smirnov column. Barely shown, Sig. (0.141) and Sig. (.200) are greater than 0.05. After conducting normality and homogeneity test, the researcher did a hypothesis testing. The hypothesis was tested with independent samples t -test in which it was conducted in order to measure the significance difference of the means within the two groups. It inferred the gathered data quantitatively so the researcher could generate a conclusion based on the inferential statistical analysis.

The result of the t -test showed that there is no significant effect of both groups. The result statistically showed the $t_{observed}$ (t_{obs}) is -6.379 at the degree of freedom (df) 54. For one-tailed test with 54 degrees of freedom, the t_{cv} is 1.6736. Since the value of t_{obs} is higher than the value of t_{cv} , then the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

This study was an experimental study which investigated the effect of Blended learning strategy toward the 8 grade students' writing competence. In accordance with the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis explained previously, it could be clearly seen that the implementation of Blended learning strategy toward the 8 grade students' writing competence did have a significant effect on the students' writing competence. The mean score of the experimental group was 84.75 meanwhile the mean score of the control group was 76.75. It simply means that the students in experimental group had better performance compared with the students in control group in terms of writing competence. By considering the result of the t -test analysis, the value of t_{obs} was higher than the value of t_{cv} . It was found that the value of t_{obs} was -6.379. At the same time, the value of t_{cv} at the degree of freedom 54 was 1.6736. Based on the result, it indicated that the difference of the mean score of the samples is significant, Null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussions

In term of writing criteria, most of generic structures of experimental group were complete. They could make some sentences and formed it into a paragraph and make a recount text with good content, organization, language and coherency. The post-test result showed a better score rather than the first score they got before the treatment given.

However, though the strategy had been applied appropriately, the students' writing was not satisfactory yet. They still did a few mistakes in choosing appropriate words. There were still a few mistakes in grammar and word spelling. Sometimes, they also got stuck with ideas. They could not elaborate their idea. This probably caused by limitation of vocabulary that they had.

Apart from the result, the researcher also prepared teaching scenarios concerning on writing skills for doing the treatment. The treatments were conducted six times in each group. Therefore, there were twelve teaching scenarios. The treatment for experimental group was Blended Learning strategy while the treatment for control group was Conventional Teaching strategy. In each meeting, both experimental and control group were taught the same genre.

In the first meeting, the activity was concerned on introducing the simple past tense. The researcher used pictures and videos for apperception. The issue raised in the apperception session was about the use of simple past tense in daily activity.

After brainstorming about the example of the use of simple past tense in daily activity, the main topic of the meeting was switched into forming sentences. The students were asked to form their own sentence according to what they did on the last week. The next activity was the students were asked to ask what their friends did on the last week. In this section both groups did a classroom discussion. In the end of the lesson in the first meeting, the teacher gave confirmation and concluded the lesson with the students.

The second meeting was not much different with the first meeting. In this meeting, the research had not yet started to conduct blended learning because the researcher needed to prepare some things. Such: introducing the blended learning to the sample. In this meeting, the experimental group was asked to watch a video about someone's activity during holiday. Before watching the video, they were asked to find sentences that indicated past event. The goal of the meeting was to enable the students to recognize the sentence that indicated past event. The next activity was sharing the sentences that had been found from the video. Some students made mistakes on pronouncing the word and finding the sentence that indicated past event. They mentioned some sentences that indicated future and present even such: "*I am a student*" and "*She hopes the next holiday will be better*". The researcher asked the other students to correct the sentences. The other goal of this meeting was to accustom the students to learn independently. In the last section of the meeting, the researcher explained to the students about blended learning and asked them to bring laptop or device that supported browsing activity. Before closing the meeting, the researcher and students concluded the lesson.

For the control group, the researcher gave explanation about the use of simple past tense. The researcher gave formula of forming simple past tense. This kind of strategy is the implementation of conventional teaching strategy. Although the formula was clear, the students still made mistakes in making sentences. For example: "*She took my book*", "*He was bought the car yesterday*", "*Last week, we were went to Denpasar*". They also made some mistakes in word spelling such: "*she things carefully*", "*we where in the school*". On the last section of the meeting, the researcher gave homework to the students to list 5 activities that they did on the last weekend. The researcher and students concluded the lesson before closing the meeting.

In the third meeting, the blended learning strategy was implemented in the experimental group. The first activity was asking the students to read a story from an online

platform called *Schoology*. Students were asked to find mistakes in the story written. After finding the mistakes, they were asked to share their findings. They were also asked to give comment or suggestion if they had different opinion with the other students. The discussion ran well. Some students took a part in the discussion. They were very active and enthusiastic. They were also asked to ask question (if any) to their friends idea and also gave answer to the question given. The meeting was ended by concluding the lesson and telling the next activity in the next meeting (still conducting blended learning).

For the control group in the third meeting, the activity was the same with the previous meeting. The researcher still conducted conventional teaching. The researcher gave formula to the students to form a past tense sentence. They were asked to form a paragraph according to the 5 activities they did on the last weekend. The researcher also gave a recount text to the students and explained the criteria of a recount text.

Conclusion

From the result of the study, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect of blended learning strategy towards 8th grade students writing competency in SMP N 1 Singaraja in academic year 2015/2016. Reflecting to that findings there are several suggestions proposed by the researcher:

1. Blended learning strategy is recommended for the teacher especially for teaching writing for young learner as a primer teaching strategy or as an alternative strategy.
2. The researcher suggests for the similar study in the future choosing different sample. For example: Senior High School or College students. It probably shows different result.
3. The researcher suggests for the similar research in the future choosing different variable. For example: reading, listening or speaking. It also suggested that the other researcher conduct more elaboration concerning the strategy developed in this study.

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