

# Implementing Schoology in Blended Learning Environment and Its Relation to Creativity in Writing

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## Abstract

*This research was done to find out 1) whether there is any significant difference in the students' writing achievement before and after the implementation of Schoology in blended learning environment and 2) the difference of students' writing achievement between students who have high creativity low creativity.. Quantitative design was done with one group pre-test and post-test design. The instruments used were the creativity and writing test. Paired samples t-test and ANOVA were used to analyze the data. The results showed that 1) there is a significant difference of students' writing achievement since  $t\text{-value} (9.029) > t\text{-table} (2.069)$  with sig. level  $< 0.05$  and 2) There is a significant difference in writing achievement between students who have high creativity and low creativity. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of Schoology is an effective way to teach writing and it gives an impact to the students in constructing and showing their best ideas in written form.*

**Keywords:** Schoology, blended learning environment, creativity, writing, high creativity, low creativity.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui 1) apakah ada perbedaan yang signifikan terhadap kemampuan siswa dalam menulis sebelum dan sesudah diajar melalui Schoology dalam lingkungan blended learning, 2) apakah ada perbedaan yang signifikan antara siswa yang memiliki kreatifitas tinggi dan kreatifitas rendah dalam menulis. Penelitian ini menerapkan desain kuantitatif dengan *pretest posttest*. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah tes menulis dan tes kreatifitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan Paired samples t-test dan ANOVA untuk menganalisis data. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa 1) ada perbedaan yang signifikan terhadap kemampuan siswa dalam menulis sebelum /dan sesudah diajar melalui Schoology dalam lingkungan blended learning karena  $t\text{-value} (9.029) > t\text{-table} (2.069)$  dengan sig. level  $< 0.05$ , 2) ada perbedaan yang signifikan antara siswa yang memiliki kreatifitas tinggi dan kreatifitas rendah dalam menulis. Jadi, dapat disimpulkan bahwa Schoology merupakan cara yang efektif untuk mengajar menulis.

**Kata kunci:** Schoology, lingkungan blended learning, kreatifitas, menulis, kreatifitas tinggi, kreatifitas rendah.

## INTRODUCTION

There are several skills must be taught to the students in English learning namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each skill has its own characteristic for instance writing. Compared to the other three English skills, writing is the last skill taught in Indonesia. The reason is because the students comprehend (listening skill) and produce English (speaking skill) first, then they will do reading and finally writing when it is the time to deal with academic context.

In fact, writing is considered as the most difficult skill to master. The students mostly face difficulty dealing with aspects of writing in composing their writing. Writing is often found as the most difficult skill among all of the

English skills both as first and as the second language. This is supported by Murcia, et al. in Febrijanto (2016: 5) who state that writing skill is often perceived as the most difficult skill since it requires a higher level of productive language control than other skills.

One of the ways to train students to get used to write is by conducting writing practice regularly. However, both teacher and students find difficulties to organize regular writing practice. The teacher cannot effectively use the time allocated in teaching writing.

In addition, the development of Information and Communication Technology era, the learning process has been moving toward the technology.

The wide development of modern technologies information and communications can give a great impact to increase learning and education quality, such as the Internet.

To solve the problems of writing, therefore the researcher focuses on the methods in the learning process. In this research, the researcher used *Schoology* in blended learning environment as a method in teaching writing. Previous research conducted by Hamad (2015) revealed that there is a positive impact on student's learning outcome for those who were taught by blended learning approach compared to those who were taught by the traditional approach. Besides, Shahrokni (2013) study confirmed the trend in logged data, suggesting that the forum, messages, and chat were among the most favorite online tasks the participants attempted in their respective courses, allowing them to share ideas a/synchronously. Concerning blended learning which applies online learning; there is a media that can be used in teaching writing outside the classroom, which its name is *Schoology*. *Schoology* gives a new learning style and environment because the learning can be happening anywhere for example at home, library or any other public area as long as the internet is available. According to Akkoyunlu and Soyulu (2008), the most significant characteristics of online 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.

The features provided in *Schoology* are almost similar to Facebook. It is easy for the students to use *Schoology* since the terms used in it are similar to Facebook, Moodle, or Edmodo, such as recent activity, messages, course, resource, groups, assignment, attendance, etc.

In addition, there are many factors coming from the student that also give different result to the implementation of *Schoology*, one of them is creativity. Creativity is one's ability to produce new, unique, original, divergent ideas and things, and the ability to solve problems. In writing, students' creativity appears in their ability to produce written products through the writing process. In writing activity, the existence of creativity is important since writing needs creative thinking and that the individual differences in creativity affect learners' contribution to tasks (Dornyei, 2005: 205).

The characteristic difference between creative and less creative students will relate to the method being applied to teach them. The nature of *Schoology* that gives the students more freedom and time to produce English seems in line with creative students. In short, creativity is considered as one of the important affective factors because success or a failure of writing depends mostly on the degree of one's creativity. Considering the explanations above, it can be assumed that the creativity of the student is influential in students' writing. Therefore, based on the background of the study above, the researcher tried to investigate; 1) whether there is any significant difference in the students' writing achievement before and after the implementation of *schoology* in blended learning environment and 2) whether there is any significant difference in students' writing achievement between high and low creative students.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Quantitative research was done with one group pre-test and post-test design. Taken purposively, a class of the fourth semester at Tarbiyah Faculty, UIN Radin Intan Lampung in academic year 2017/2018, majoring in English Education that consists of twenty-four students was the sample of this research. There are three variables in the total of this research: 1) Dependent Variable. The dependent variable of this research is students' writing achievement. 2) Independent Variable. *Schoology* in Blended Learning is the second variable of this research, independent variable, and 3) Moderator Variable. The moderator variable is students' creativity.

The instruments used were the creativity test and writing test. Creativity test consists of 30 questions based on six categories proposed by Munandar. Those are word initials, word creation, sentence formulation from three letters, similar characteristics, extraordinary uses of words, and consequences of effects. Writing test was made by the researcher. The researcher gave the test through free writing where the students are asked to write based on the certain topic that is decided by the researcher. Paired samples t-test was used to answer RQ1 and ANOVA was used to answer RQ2.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following explanations are results and discussion of the two research questions in this research.

## 1. The Improvement of Students' Writing

**Chart 1. The improvement from pretest and posttest**

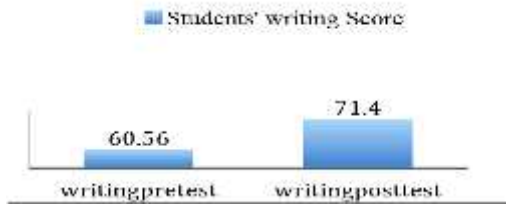


Chart 1 above shows us that before the treatment, the mean score of students seen from their writing pretest is 60.56. Having done several treatments through *Schoology* in a blended learning environment, we can see that the students' mean score increased into 71.4 seen from their posttest score. This implied that the implementation of *Schoology* in blended learning environment affects the students writing achievement, especially for the low-level student. The total of the pretest score is 1453, the mean score is 60.56, the highest score is 74, the lowest score is 51. As it can be seen that the students' mean score of pretest is 60.56. This can be indicated that many of the students got low scores in the pre-test. There are three categories of students' level divided. There are low level, middle level, and high level of student seen from their writing achievement. The result shows that the students' writing pretest scores differs from the lowest score (51) in interval 51-55 to the highest score (74) in interval 71-75. From 24 students who participated in the pretest, there were fourteen students who got score lower than 60.56. Then, this indicates that the students' ability in writing seen from the pretest score was still low.

Having done several treatments through *Schoology*, it was resulted that the total of the posttest score increased to 1682, the mean score is 71.4, the highest score is 79, and the lowest score is 60. The students' mean score of posttest is 71.4. This indicates that the students' ability in writing seen from the posttest score increased after the treatment. Although the mean score improvement is not really high, the score for each student improves much better than pretest. The result showed that the students' writing posttest scores differs from the lowest score (60) in interval 56-60 to the highest score (79) in interval 76-80, with the most frequent score that is 66 in interval 66-80. Ten out of 24 students

got high score, thirteen students got middle score and one got low score. In the pretest, there were 14 students who got low score while in the posttest there were nine students left who got low score. The gain of low score seen from writing pretest and posttest is 5. For middle level of students' writing achievement, there were 8 students who got middle score in the pretest and 5 students who got middle score in the posttest with the gain of 3. Then, there were 2 students who got high score in pretest and it increased respectively into 10 students who got high score after being taught through *Schoology* in blended learning with the gain of 8. Based on that explanation, high level students has the highest gain (8) compared to middle and low level students. It can be said that the implementation of *Schoology* affects most to the students who got high score. In addition, since there were more than 50% of students got scores >60 in the posttest, this can be indicated that their posttest results are satisfied enough. It implied that the implementation of *Schoology* in blended learning environment in teaching writing could increase students' writing ability.

In order to test whether the hypotheses of this research are accepted or not, the researcher analyzed the data from pretest and posttest score by using Paired Sample T-Test. Having analyzed the data, it was resulted that t-value (9.029) is higher than t-table(2.069) with the level of significance under 0.05.  $H_0$  is rejected if sig.2-tailed <  $\alpha$  = 0.05; meaning that there is a significant difference between the two means being compared (posttest and pretest). Thus, it means that the implementation of *Schoology* in blended learning environments in teaching writing significantly increase the students' writing achievement.

This result happens since having practiced the treatments several times made the students more aware and got many inputs from their friends through *Schoology*. They got many references, corrections, and suggestions in improving their writing since they had the discussion session with their peer in one of the writing processes through *Schoology*. Related to the explanation above, in which the students discussed and reviewed their friends' writing, it made the students engaged actively. As Schuetz (2015) stated that discussions are one of the easiest and most effective tools for assessing students and engaging learners in conversations. Each discussion contains threaded commenting that

allows participants to respond to each other's thoughts. So while the students are receiving feedback from their peers, they are gaining valuable formative feedback from the conversation.

Besides, the students also had more time to think, to give comment and suggestions to their friends, and to find out more supporting ideas - from the internet- related to the topics since they can access *Schoology* anywhere they want as long as there is an available internet connection. As the result, their writing posttest increase better than the pretest score.

The result of this research was in line with Sicat (2015) who confirmed that the proficiency of the subjects in Business Writing could be further enhanced through the LMS *Schoology*. The positive involvement of using *Schoology* in blended environments is also supported by other findings. Pudín's (2014) finding implied that most of the teachers were keen to adopt the handbook to be integrated as part of their lesson plan in teaching writing and they suggested that *Schoology* have the potential to enhance the teaching and learning process apart from making writing in the classroom more interactive and fun. In addition, Ardi (2017) suggested that *Schoology* m-learning platform helped the students to exercise autonomy in EAP learning. The students exercised their control over learning management, cognitive process, and selection of learning materials. The exercise of autonomy is due to the affordance of *Schoology*. First, *Schoology's* social networking interface facilitated interaction and communication among the students. Second, its mobile application enabled the students to learn English at their pace, time, and place. Third, the media-rich materials encouraged the students to further explore other materials online.

Since the *Schoology* in this research was used in blended learning environments which combine face to face and online learning, it gives the students opportunities to become an autonomous learners and also provides flexibility and efficiency in teaching and learning activities, especially in teaching writing. It can transform students' learning experiences. It gives chance for students to stay in touch with their teacher and classmates in online class. Students can have more choices in learning but still under the guidance and instruction of their teacher at the same time. As stated by Davis & Fill (2007: 817)

that blended learning has the potential to transform student's learning experiences and outcomes. It means that blended learning focuses on learners and has a significant impact on their learning experience.

Considering the result of this research and several previous findings, it is said that the implementation of *Schoology* in a blended learning environment is proven to be a writing-improving media for students.

## **2) High and Low Creative Students' Difference**

The researcher used the data from writing posttest in order to answer the research questions. The data were divided into two categories namely high creativity students and low creativity students.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether the hypotheses were accepted or not. The result shows that there is a significant difference on writing achievement between students who have high creativity and those who have low creativity, both in pretest and posttest of writing. It is proved by the sig. of pretest writing that is 0.031 and writing posttest 0.15 (<0.05). This result means that there is a difference in students' writing achievement between high and low creative students after being taught through *Schoology*.

The result of this research shows that students having high creativity have better writing skill than those having low creativity. This happens because the different level of students' creativity will determine the students' ways in building, constructing, and sharing their ideas. The students with high creativity tend to learn independently without always be guided by the teacher. They can explore anything and experience the procedures of the activities given by the teacher autonomously. As Csikszentmihalyi in Oktarin (2015) states that students having high creativity will be passionate, and the big challenge is the way to strengthen their ability. They are independent in doing something; the little instruction of the teacher will be then further expanded so they can do beyond the instruction of the teacher.

Further, in the teaching-learning process, the students having high creativity tend to be more motivated in following the learning process, doing teacher's instruction and finishing their

task well too. Lau (2011: 215) says that creative people are often diligent, disciplined, and highly focused.

To achieve the goal in writing, both teacher and student need not only appropriate method in teaching but also the creativity. The students who have high creativity are going to achieve the goal better than those who have low creativity. This might happen since high creative students will be easier in delivering their ideas in teaching and learning process. It is in line with Sternberg in Villalba (2008: 11) who states that there are five commonalities in the research of creativity around the world. First, creativity “involves thinking that aims at producing ideas or products that are relatively novel and that are, in some respect, compelling”.

Creative students are not predictable to make a better writing considering the complex notion. It means that in producing a piece of writing, students need an amount of creativity. It indicates that creativity determines students' writing ability. The composition of writing usually requires considerable amounts of creativity.

On the contrary, people who have low creativity tend to be passive. They have a monotonous concept, idea, and creation in solving the problem. They are unable to come up with their own fresh idea and opinions when learning, just produce a conventional idea. They limit their way of thinking to explore their idea braver. The students with low creativity will just write what he sees, reads, and listens without being able to think what is beyond. It is supported by Stenberg in Asmara (2013: 13) who stated that low creativity persons have a poorer idea, has a difficulty when they solve a problem and tend to spend relatively more time in planning. In addition, students with low creativity do not take part in any activity enthusiastically.

For instance, in the classroom, low creativity students are lazy to explore their ability especially in producing a simple draft or sentence to make a good writer. Moreover, the students having low creativity prefer to imitate from the teacher or other students during the process of writing. Uncreative students focus their attention too much, and this prevents them from thinking of original ideas.

Related to the result of high creative students in the high level of writing achievement, It can be said that Schoology is more effective in teaching writing to the students having high creativity because this method includes a variety of activities and tasks that are organized systematically in relation to the tools and other available resources. As said by Keshta & Harb (2013: 218) that the Blended Learning created an on-going interactive learning environment that includes interactions between students and teachers, communication, cooperation and teamwork, and active participation.

Moreover, the students who have high creativity also like challenges and try to enjoy step by step of activities in exploring ideas. Moreover, they work hard to achieve the product of their writing. They will try to express their own ideas without thinking about the risk. Higgs & McCarthy in Oktarin (2015) add that creative students need to play, give critical judgment, and take risks. The students having high creativity cannot make a simple writing; they will explore their potential ideas to make a significant contribution to their writing. It is line with Blended Learning Method which is applied through Schoology because in this method the students will be the center point in the learning activities while teacher just has to manage, motivate, facilitate, and control the material and the process of learning in the classroom.

Students having low creativity have different characteristics with creative students. They are characterized by passiveness, no initiation, following other ideas, and acting recklessly. They do task based on what is instructed and do not really want to think beyond it. They like something simple and like being guided. This goes in line with Manktelow (2004: 9) stating that uncreative students do not think about creativity, and do not give themselves the opportunity to create anything new.

Students with a low level of creativity do not take part in any activities enthusiastically. They cannot give new ideas and share with others. These are some of the reasons why students having low creativity writing scores are less than those having high creativity. Their low creativity makes them unable to express their ideas better. This can be seen from the results of their writing in which the scores are lower than those having a high level of creativity.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and data analysis described in the previous chapter, the researcher comes to some conclusions as follow:

- 1) There is a significant difference in students' writing achievement before and after the implementation of Schoology in a blended learning environment. This happens because Schoology provides the students an opportunity to share, collaborate, and discuss any ideas they have without the limitation of time since they can do the writing activities not only in the classroom but also outside the class.
- 2) There is a significant difference in writing achievement between the students who have high creativity and those who have low creativity. In relation to this study, the implementation of Schoology in blended learning environment affects more to students with high creativity because those students like challenges and try to enjoy step by step of activities in exploring ideas.

Since there were several students who did not really engage actively, the researcher suggests that the teacher needs to inform first to the students that their activities in responding to their friends' work will be taken into the score. Thus, they will get involved more actively. In relation to the participant of the research, further study may apply more participants in order to enhance the generalization and transferability of the finding of the research.

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