The use of WhatsApp group discussion to improve students' writing achievement

Sri Wahyuni[1]
Kurnia Febianti[1]
[1]STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam
sriwahyunipga86@gmail.com

Abstract: The aim of this study was to find out whether the use of WhatsApp group could improve students' ability in English writing achievement. The population of the study covered all of the second semester students of English study program in STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagaralam. Fourty students were selected purposively from all the population. The researcher used Quasi-experimental as the research methodology. To collect the data, written test was used to measure the students' achievement in English writing. The data were analyzed by using paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test. The result of data analysis showed that the students obtained better improvement in English writing ability after being treated by using WhatsApp group discussion. Based on the result of independent t-test, the t value obtained was 5.298 and the significance level was p <.001. Futhermore, it can be concluded that there was a significant difference between the student who were taught through WhatsApp group discussion and those who were not. The students were interested using WhatsApp group as media of learning especially in English writing. During the discussion in the WhatsApp group, they could get input such as new knowledge, better grammar, and improved vocabulary. WhatsApp group is a good way to be used as a teaching media especially in increasing students' writing achievement.

Key words: WhatsApps, Group Discussion, Writing Achievement

BACKGROUND

Writing is considered as the most elaborate skill to be acquired by students. It plays a significant role in communication especially in this information age. According to Massi (2001), writing is a tool for creation of ideas and consolidation of the linguistic system for communication in interactive way. Writing is one of the ways to translate our thought for other people. Moreover, Byrne (1993) stated that writing is the combination of letters which are arranged to form sentence or paragraph. According to Sturm & Koppenhaver (2000), Writing involves complex thinking that must integrate with multiple component including the topic or theme, word choice, organization, purpose, sequence and transcription. Writing can be extremely demanding for students cognitive, linguistic, affective, and psychomotor memories and abilities (Bryne, 1993).

In globalization era, technology is used in many aspects of life economy like social, politics, and also education. Habibi, Mukminin, Riyanto, Prasojo, Sulistiyo, Sofwan,

& Saudagar (2014) found that when teachers use technology as learning aids, the learners can improve the learning processes and close the achievement gaps between the students. However, pairing teachers with technology is currently the best method of providing high-quality education for students (Massi, 2001).

Nowadays, technology presents some media to be used in communication like social media. With the increase of time, scope, and frequency of the Internet and technologies use, people have started to shape the way they communicate, share, and behave (Habibi, et al., 2018). Social networks, which are very popular among young people, are becoming prevalent due to their nature to meet the needs of individuals towards socialization. Process of interaction has become one of the important elements of the daily life. The high numbers of people join the social networks, which are defined as programs that ease to interact between individuals and groups. This process, which started by commonly used web based social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in particular, began to be approached in different dimensions after the introduction of the messaging applications rooted in mobile phones and are specifically designed for mobile phones (WhatsApp, BBM, Line, etc.).

By using technology of social media everybody can learn anything including students. There are no limitations to what students can learn outside the classroom. When they implement it properly, they can improve the learning processes and close the achievement gaps. The same report showed that replacing teachers with technology is not a successful method. The students still need their teachers. However, pairing teachers with technology is currently the best method of providing high-quality education for students (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

In this study, the researcher used WhatsApp as a media in learning process. WhatsApp is not only a personal messaging application, but this application also contains the broadcasting and group functionalities that makes a valuable tool both for educational and corporate activities among the students and teacher. During online, the students can connect with others to create learning and discussion easily.

Writing seems to be the most difficult one, because it involves some elements such as grammatical function, content, vocabulary, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. The researchers expected that by using WhatsApp group discussion, it could improve the students' ability in writing English. With all the features that available in WhatsApp, it becomes more interesting to share the idea in written form.

The Concept of Writing

In learning English the students are taught four skills include writing skill. According to Celce-Murcia (2001, p. 305) writing skill is the ability to express one's idea in written form in a language with reasonable accuracy and coherence. Meanwhile, Hedge (1992, p. 7) stated that writing is a tool for creation of ideas and consolidation of the linguistic system by using it for communication objectives in an interactive way.

According to Ur (1999, p. 70), "The purpose of writing, in principle, is the expression of ideas, the conveying of a message to the reader; so the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important aspect of the writing". On the other hand, the writer needs also to pay some attention to formal aspects: neat handwriting, correct spelling and punctuation, as well as acceptable grammar and careful selection of vocabulary. While Axelrod and Cooper (2010) argued that the very act of writing encourages you to be creative as well as organized and logical in your thinking when you write sentences, paragraphs, and whole essays. Writing helps you think and learn, enhance your chances of success, contributes to your personal development, and strengthens your relationships with other people. It means that is way writing is important.

Writing is one of the ways that we translate our thought for other people. Some people are better at expressing translation when they read what they have to say rather than hearing them speak. Writing assists them with other language tasks as well. Writing helps them learn how to form language, how to spell, how to put together a plot. They learn how to make a logical argument, or how to persuade, mainly through writing (Liu & Brantmeier, 2019).

Writing as a medium expands further when we consider nonverbal media and multimedia documents. Many students in writing studios now write and talk on computer network and E-mail; computerize text in the future will include pictures, animation, hypertext and sound. Teachers in advanced classes teach document design, incorporating graphs, charts, diagrams, varied fonts, and other iconic features into student texts. Writing is a tool that can be used in a variety of ways to increase students' understanding and learning of subject matter. Students experienced increase in the amount of writing they produced and the amount of writing instruction they were provided.

The Use of WhatsApp Group Discussion

WhatsApp is a free messenger application for smartphone that works across multiple platform and is being widely used by the people. WhatsApp uses internet to send messages, images, audios and videos. WhatsApp, owned by Facebook, now has one billion users worldwide and is the biggest online messenger application on market. Founded in 2009 by ex-Yahoo employees it started as a small start-up and swelled to 250,000 users in just a few months. In 2014, it was acquired by Facebook and has seen continued growth, reaching more than one billion users.

There are many features that are available in WhatsApp. One of them is group chat. In WhatsApp group, all of the member stay in one house, where all the members of group can connect and share everything. In the features provided, students and teachers can interact with each other. Discussion groups allow them to communicate, have the discussion, and send pictures, recordings and more. All activities can be

arranged by teachers so that students can improve their writing skill during the classroom activities and outside of the class**.**

According to Rosenberg and Asterhan (2018), the are some advantages of using WhatsApp group discussion in learning process; Teacher are available after school our, as public or individual communication channel, kinds of textual communication and less privacy protection issues. Alshammari, Parkes, and Adlington (2017) states that WhatsApp allows teachers to take on a greater facilitation role in their teaching. The teachers can facilitate all features to support their English teaching. The features of WhatsApp are as follows: 1. Message; the Message feature in WhatsApp is reliable and simple message. Users can send messages to their friends and their family for free. WhatsApp uses the phone's Internet phone connection to send messages so users can avoid the cost of SMS. 2. Voice call and video WhatsApp Doing voice call and video call by using WhatsApp is free. The users are free to talk with their friends and family, even if they are in another country. And with free video calls, the users can have face-to-face conversations when voice or text is not enough. WhatsApp voice and video calls use phone's Internet connection instead of cellular calling minutes, so the users do not have to worry about expensive call charges. 3. Photos and Videos Through photos and videos feature, the users can share their important moments by sending photos and videos on WhatsApp immediately. They can even capture moments that are important to you with a built-in camera. With WhatsApp, photos and videos are delivered quickly even if the users are in a slow connection. 4. Document; the users can share the documents easily. They can send PDFs, documents, spreadsheets, slideshows and more, without the hassle of using email or file sharing apps. In addition, they can send documents up to 100 MB in size that will make it easier for them to share what they need to share with the people they want. 5. Chat Group 153 Users can connect with Groups via group chat. They can connect with people who are important to themselves, like family or co-workers. With group chat, users can share messages, photos, and videos of up to 256 people at once. Users can also name groups, mute, or customize notifications, and more. 6. WhatsApp on Web and Desktop WhatsApp can make Conversations Run with WhatsApp on the web and on desktops. Users can smoothly sync all chat to their computers so they can chat on whatever device is most convenient for them. They can download the desktop app or visit web.WhatsApp.com to get started. 7. End-to-end encryption End-to-end encryption is security by default. Users can share their personal moments in WhatsApp. When encrypted end-to-end, users' messages and users' calls are secured, only users and people who communicate with users can read messages or hear the call, and no one is in between, even WhatsApp. 8. Voice Message WhatsApp users can use this feature to say what's in their mind by tapping a tap on a voicemail item in a chat room. They can greet his friend or his family and telling long stories.

METHOD

In this research, we used quasi-experimental design. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009, p. 271) propose "quasi-experimental designs do not include the use of random assignment". Writer chose the non-equivalent groups pre-test and post-test design. In the non-equivalent groups pre-test and post-test design involve two groups, they were control group and experimental group that consisting of 20 students in each group. In this research, the writer took two groups from second semester students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagaralam as the sample of study. Firstly, both of groups were given a pre-test in form of written test. After that the experimental group was given a treatment by using WhatsApp group discussion and for the control group was being taught by using conventional method and in the last section both of groups was given a post test.

The data of this study were collected by using written test. To assess students' writing achievement, the students were assigned to write a short composition which consists of 250-300 words based on topic given. To evaluate it, we were assisted by two raters. The results of the students' writing were scored using writing rubric introduced by Anderson as cited in Hughes (2003). This instrument consists of knowledge of the text structure, vocabulary, mechanic, fluency, and organization. Each point has its own level, that is, from level one below to level six which show the development and improvement of students' writing skill.

Paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test were used to analyze the data. The paired sample t-test was used to find out the significant progress within group after being taught by using WhatsApp group discussion. Whereas independent t-test was used to find out whether or not there was a significant difference between the students who were taught by using WhatsApp group discussion and those who were not.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After joining the online class in WhatsApp group discussion, the students in experimental group showed the significant improvement in writing achievement. Based on the data analysis, it is found in pretest that only 1 student or 5% who got score in good category. While in the post-test, 10 students or 50% got score in good category. It can be seen in the table below.

To find out whether there is significant progress after being treated by using WhatsApp group discussion, the writer analyzed the data by using paired sample t-test. Based on the result of anlysis, it can be seen that the mean difference in writing achievement within the experimental group was 13.00, t-value= 9.820, p<0.00 (N=20) which indicated that there was significant progress between the students' pre-test and post-test within group. In statistical analyses, the writer also found the mean difference between posttest in experimental and control group for writing achievement was 9.900

t-value=5.298, p<0.01. Based on the result, there was a significant difference between the students' post-test score in experimental and control group.

Table 1
The result of writing achievement of experimental group in pre-test and post-test

Score range	Category	Pre-test frequency	Percentage	Post-test frequency	Percentage
86-100	Execellent	-	-	-	-
71-85	Good	1	5%	10	50%
56-70	Average	14	70%	10	50%
41-55	Poor	5	25%	-	-
<41	Very poor	-	-	-	-

The result of the study showed that there were significant differences for students' writing achievement after they were addressed the treatment, using WhatsApp group discussion. This technique gave the students more motivation to be involved in group interaction by online chatting. WhatsApp application is a useful tool for teaching English language. It provides students with: a) opportunities for practicing English language skills and components for free, b) more personal and comprehensive relationship between students and teachers, c) students will be more sociable person and also to be better, and d) staying connected to the learners and making the students available for help and support in their quest to learning English. Then, Students will feel confident, independence, enthusiasm, and had a positive attitude to learn English language. In addition, students do not only access the WhatsApp in the classroom but also outside the classroom. It helps students to learn English in 24 hours. They can read and write the materials times that is given by their teachers more than one time whenever they wants. Students are free to ask their classmates and their teachers through WhatsApp when she/he gets difficulties or there is something not clear enough about the learning material given.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and interpretation, it was found that the students in the experimental group with the treatment, using WhatsApp group could improve their writing achievement. Besides, they also obtained a better achievement than the control group on all aspects of writing skill. In the other words, the application of WhatsApp group discussion could significantly improve students' writing achievement. In addition, from the result of this study, it was found that there was possible reason that influenced the students' writing achievement. Based on the experience during the treatment, It was seen that the use of WhatsApp group have the potential not only in improving students' writing achievement but also in facilitating cooperation, increasing social interaction,

interest and motivation, sense of belonging, academic success, student-student and student-teacher interaction, and supporting anytime and anywhere learning, providing peer support, feedback, and allowing for information sharing in education.

REFERENCES

Alshammari, R., Parkes, M., & Adlington, R. (2017). Using WhatsApp in EFL instruction with Saudi Arabian university students. *Arab World English Journal, 8*(4), 68-64. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no4.5.

Axelord, R. B., & Cooper, R. G. (2010). *The ST. Martin's guide to writing*. New York: Martin's Press.

Bryne, D. (1993). *Teaching writing skills*. Essex, UK: Longman Group.

Celce-Murcia, M. (1992). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Boston, MA: Stratford Book.

Fraenkel, R. J., & Wallen, E. N. (2009). *How to design and evaluate research in education seventh edition*. New York : McGraw-Hill.

Habibi, A., Mukminin, A., Riyanto, Y., Prasojo, L. D., Sulistiyo, U., Sofwan, M., & Saudagar, F. (2018). Building an online community: Student teachers' perceptions on the advantages of using social networking services in a teacher education program. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 19*(1), 46-61.

Liu, H., & Brantmeier, C. (2019). "I know English": Self-assessment of foreign language reading and writing abilities among young Chinese learners of English. *System, 80*, 60-72.

Massi, M. P. (2001). Interactive writing in the EFL class: A repertoire of tasks. *The Internet TESL Journal, 7*(6).

Mishra, P., & Koehler, M. J. (2006). Technological pedagogical content knowledge: A framework for teacher knowledge. *Teachers college record, 108*(6), 1017-1054.

Rosenberg, H., & Asterhan, C.S.C. (2018). Students' perspective on teacher students WhatsApp interaction in secondary school. Journal of Information Technology Education Research. Vol 17

Sturm, J. & Koppenhaver, D. A. (2000). Supporting writing development in adolescent with development disabilities. *Topic in Language Disorders, 20*(20), 73-79.

Ur, P. (1999). A *Course in language teaching*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Weigle, C., S. (2002). *Assessing writing*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.