DEVELOPING JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH WHATSAPP MESSENGER

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are to investigate the use of WhatsApp messenger to develop students' writing skills, and to find out the benefits and challenges of the use of WhatsApp messenger to develop students' writing skills. The design of this study was classroom action research. The researcher used observation, interview, and test to collect the data. In analyzing the data, the researcher followed the procedure of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The study reports that there was an improvement of the students' recount text writing skill through scientific approach. In cycle I, the percentage of scores covers steps of rhetorical was (67.50%), grammar (71.25%), vocabulary (66.25%), clarity of meaning (67.50%), and relation between ideas (63.75%). In cycle II, the percentage of scores covers steps of rhetorical was (78.75%), grammar (78.75%), vocabulary (76.25%), clarity of meaning (87.50%), and relation between ideas (81.25%). This study also reports some benefits of using WhatsApp messenger were; the students used their creativity in teaching and learning activity, were interested in teaching and learning processes, and conveyed their assumptions in associating and networking freely. In contrast, it also had challenges in teaching and learning processes. The challenges were; most of students were not enthusiastic to follow teaching and learning of WhatsApp messenger. They must be persuaded to ask questions in questioning phase and they must be directed to be disciplined in the classroom.

Keywords: Online Language Learning, WhatsApp Messenger, Teaching Writing Skills

INTRODUCTION

Writing describes activities conducted by students to express something about what they want to write. Elizabeth and Rao (2014: 4) stated that the general objectives of teaching English are four-fold namely, to develop listening comprehension, English ability, English comprehension, and writing ability. Junior high school students still find difficulties to write English sentences. According to Bialystok (cited in Ellis, 1996), in learning writing, the implicit knowledge is developed through exposure to communicate language use and facilitated by the strategy of functional practicing (attempted by the learner to maximize exposure to language).

Based on limited observation in writing process, they cannot produce good English sentences because the grammar of English language is different from that of Indonesian (Sanjaya, 2013). It means that students have to understand and master English grammar well before they write, so the result of writing will be grammatically correct. Another problem in learning writing is that they lack preparation before learning to write and do

not have enough competence to follow the subject. It happens because they rarely practice writing both in the classroom and at home.

Based on the observation, students still find difficulties in writing text which occur in the forms of errors. One of the causes is the effect of students' first language. The students often write sentences using the structure of their first language. Therefore, the results of their writings are ungrammatical and can be meaningless. In fact, there are differences between English and Indonesian structures. It means that in writing English, the students have to understand first the English structure then they start to write some English sentences grammatically without being affected by their first language.

The students' problem in writing is also caused by the development of Covid-19 in Indonesia that affects the education. The Covid-19 epidemic is the first and largest health crisis of this era. Many countries have decided to close schools, colleges and universities. Education is one of the areas hardest hit by the coronavirus. Worse, it happened quickly and on a large scale. Students are forced to study at home as face-to-face learning is stopped to prevent the transmission of Covid-19. In addition, many teachers are still insufficient in teaching with online learning applications, especially in various areas. Some studies have shown that most students have negative attitudes towards online learning. However, they agreed that online learning was a viable solution during the COVID-19 epidemic (Roman et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, during online learning, teachers and students communicate a lot through WhatsApp messenger, not only used by teachers and students but also students with students or teachers with teachers. Zoom, Meet, Skype and WebEx are used as video conference platforms as Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas, Edmodo, Schoology, Google Classroom and the like as online training programs. According to Zhao (2003) the current literature review has found that there is a lot of research on technology implementation in online education related to cost savings and efficiency, that improving the quality and effectiveness of online education requires a framework that must be applied in schools.

WhatsApp is a messaging app that allows you to send text messages and voice calls, as well as video calls, photos, other media, documents, and user locations. It works from a mobile device, but can also be accessed from the desktop. This service uses a standard cell phone number. Initially, users could only interact with other users individually or in groups, but in September 2017 WhatsApp introduced a new business platform that enables the company to provide customer service to customers. Mistar (2016) stated that WhatsApp is a smartphone application for instant messaging. It provides faster and easier communication among the users. Then Jain, Luaran, and Rahman (2016) also stated that WhatsApp is particularly popular because its enhanced capabilities allow users to interact in a variety of ways.

There are many things that can affect students' writing skills, such as through social media or WhatsApp. The results of observations indicated that the biggest problem the student faced, besides the language barrier, was brainstorming. In a student chat that only uses English; I find a conversation about everyday activities and write a short conversation. They find information and news and can communicate with their community and community. They can develop their English writing skills. Given this

situation, the author tries to examine the effectiveness of using WhatsApp Messenger as one of the online learning techniques for developing students' writing skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching

Teaching and learning are important activities conducted together in the classroom. According to Kimble and Garmezy (cited in Brown, 2000: 7), teaching is showing someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand. Hornby states that teaching is to show somebody how to do something so that they will be able to do it themselves (1995: 1225). Elizabeth and Rao (2014: 4) stated that the general objectives of teaching English are four-fold namely, to develop listening comprehension, English ability, English comprehension, and writing ability.

Elizabeth and Rao (2014: 4) state that the objectives of teaching and learning English to children are (a) to understand English with ease when spoken at normal speed, (b) to speak English correctly and fluently with proper stress and intonation, (c) to read English with comprehension and reasonable speed, (d) to write neatly and correctly at reasonable speed, to enjoy simple poems in English, (e) to acquire knowledge of the element of English for practical command of the language, and (f) to translate common English words, phrases and sentences into their functional equivalent in mother tongue. According to Nunan (1992: 92), teaching English involves three areas of knowledge. The first is mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and English): using the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation, the second is functions: knowing when clarity of message is essential (transaction/information exchange) and when precise understanding is not required, and the third is social and cultural rules and norms: understanding how to take into account that is English to whom, in what circumstances, about what and for what reason.

Online Learning

The teaching and learning process by using electronic media or utilizing technology is called online learning. Online learning provides opportunities for students to get to know various kinds of technology to support the learning process. It is in line with Hartley (2001) "E-learning is the type of learning and teaching that allows the delivery of teaching materials to students by using the internet media or computer network media" (as cited in Sagita & Khairunnisa, 2020: 18).

According to Ally (2008: 7), "online learning as the use of the internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal meaning, and to grow from the learning experience". Additionally, Campbell (2004) argues, "the emphasis of online learning in higher education settings is on the development of metacognitive as well as reflective and collaborative learning" (as cited in Keengwe & Kidd, 2010: jainjain534).

WhatsApp Application

Mistar (2016) stated that WhatsApp is a smartphone application for instant

messaging. It provides faster and easier communication among the users. Then Jain, Luaran, and Rahman (2016) also stated that WhatsApp is particularly popular because its enhanced capabilities allow users to interact in a variety of ways. I t can be indicated that WhatsApp is an application on Smartphone that can make the users can be interaction with other users faster and easier in the form of instant messaging. But, actually WhatsApp has some features that mad the users easier to share their opinions, or share what they do.

According to Jain, Luaran, and Rahman (2016) WhatsApp is a useful learning tool that makes 15 posting, sharing content and it makes the online discussions easy and available anywhere and anytime. As cited in Mistar (2016), it is one of the creative teaching media which is used to attract students' interest, attention and provides fun-based learning. WhatsApp allows the students to express thoughts and ideas via various features of the WhatsApp application platform, such as attaching pictures, sharing videos, sharing web-links, recording videos and many more. It can helps the students to get actively involved in learning activities via various features on this application. It is concluded that the WhatsApp features help the students in learning process.

The Nature of Writing

Writing has close relationship with composition. They both have the same meaning. According to Brown (2000: 335), composition is supposed to (a) meet certain standards of prescribed English rhetorical style, (b) reflect accurate grammar, and (c) be organized in conformity with what the audience would consider to be conventional. A good deal of attention is placed on model compositions that students will emulate and on how well a student's final products measured up against a list of criteria that includes content, organization, vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation.

According to Bialystok (cited in Ellis, 1996), in learning writing, the implicit knowledge is developed through exposure to communicate language use and facilitated by the strategy of functional practicing (attempted by the learner to maximize exposure to language). Explicit knowledge arises when learners focus on the language code, and is facilitated by 'formal practicing', which involves either consciousness of the second language or attempting to automatize already learnt explicit knowledge. In this case, the implicit knowledge is the writing skill itself. The writing skill can be developed by doing more writing practices.

Teaching Writing

Richard and Rodgers (cited in Brown, 2000) made two principal contributions to our understanding of the concept of teaching writing. The two principle contributions are (a) they specified the necessary elements of language-teaching designs that had heretofore been left somewhat vague. (b) They nudged us into at last relinquishing the notion that separate and discrete methods are the essential building blocks of methodology. According to Spratt, Pulverness, and Williams (2005: 27), key concepts and the language teaching classroom have some principles. They are stated below.

a. The sub skill of writing that is taught will vary a lot, depending on the age and needs of our learners. At primary level may be spent a lot of time teaching learners how to form letters and words and write short texts of a few words or sentences, often by

copying models. At secondary level may be needed to focus more on the skill required to write longer texts such as letters, emails, or compositions.

b. When teaching writing, it is needed to focus on both accuracy and on building up and communicating a message.

c. Sometimes in the classroom learners write by completing gaps in sentences with correct word, taking notes for listening comprehension, writing one-word answers to writing comprehension questions.

d. By encouraging learners to use the writing process in the classroom we help them to be creative and to develop their message, i.e. what they want to say.

Descriptive Text

Description in writing is the process of create communication image through words. According to Oshima and Hogue (1999: 48) states that "description is writing about how something or someone looks and uses space order." Moreover, Knapp and Watkins (2005: 97) states that describing is also a central feature of narrative text providing the means for developing characterization, sense of place, and key themes. In addition, Dorothy E Zemach (2005: 25) also states that descriptive paragraph explains how someone or something looks or feels.

Description reproduces the way things look, smell, taste, feel, or sound. It may also evoke moods, such as happiness, loneliness, or fear. It is used to create a visual image of people, places, even of units of time (George E. Wishon and James M. Burk¸ 2008: 397):

METHOD

Design of the Research

The type of this study was an action research. According to Kemmis and Taggart (1988: 10), action research is a way of increasing our knowledge of classroom and as a tool in teaching. The objective of conducting action research is to develop the knowledge of classroom through the teaching and learning process.

Subject of the Study

The object of this study was the seventh grade students of SMP Taman Dewasa Ibu Pawiyatan, especially the 7th grade consisting of 20 students

Research Instruments

According to Arikunto (1998), there are some ways in collecting data; they are questionnaire, interview, observation, experiment and collecting or combination technique. In this research, the instruments used by the researcher to collect the data are observation, oral interview and test.

Data Collection Technique

In this technique, the researcher has some steps in collecting the data about the students' problems in writing descriptive text by using WhatsApp messenger. The steps in collecting the data are the researcher prepared the texts for the students as the respondents of the research. The researcher came to the class and then asked the students to prepare a piece of paper. The researcher then asked the students to write

descriptive text individually. The researcher collected the descriptive texts that have been done by the students to be analyzed.

Data Analysis Technique

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzes the data. In analyzing the data, the researcher also requires certain techniques. The techniques used to analyze the data are the researcher classified the activities based on the stages of teaching writing by using WhatsApp messenger; pre-teaching, while-teaching and post teaching, and based on the interview and test. Finally, the researcher described the stages of teaching writing by using WhatsApp messenger in details based on the result of the research. The researcher explained the development of the students' English mastery after learning writing through the use of WhatsApp messenger.

RESULTS

The use of WhatsApp messenger to develop students' writing skills

Based on the observation, the students still find difficulties to write English sentences. Based on limited observation in writing process, they cannot produce good English sentences because the grammar of English language is different from that of Indonesian. It means that students have to understand and master English grammar well before they write, so the result of writing will be grammatically correct. Another problem in learning writing is that they lack preparation before learning to write and do not have enough competence to follow the subject. It happens because they rarely practice writing both in the classroom and at home. So, they always find some difficulties in learning to write.

Based on the observation, students still find difficulties in writing text which occur in the forms of errors. One of the causes is the effect of students' first language. The students often write sentences using the structure of their first language. Therefore, the results of their writings are ungrammatical and can be meaningless. In fact, there are differences between English and Indonesian structures. It means that in writing English, the students have to understand first the English structure then they start to write some English sentences grammatically without being affected by their first language.

The students' problem in writing is also caused by the development of Covid-19 that affects the education. The students are forced to study at home as face-to-face learning is stopped to prevent the transmission of Covid-19. In addition, many teachers are still insufficient in teaching with online learning applications, especially in various areas. Some studies have shown that most students have negative attitudes towards online learning. However, they agreed that online learning was a viable solution during the COVID-19 epidemic.

The teacher used five stages in teaching writing through WhatsApp messenger namely observing, questioning, associating, and experimenting and networking. The activity was started by introducing the text to the students. The teacher asked the students' knowledge about the characteristics of the text. After that, the teacher explained about the characteristics of the text. The teacher asked the students to give some examples of the text. In this activity, the teacher asked the students to mention the text

or stories had been heard. It was done to know the students' knowledge about fiction stories.

The teacher gave the students five minutes to read the text. The teacher also asked the students to understand the content of the text. Having finished writing the text, the teacher asked the students about the content of text to check their understanding. In addition, the teacher asked the students to use the vocabulary lists on the last page if they found difficult words in the texts. The teacher continued to the next activity. In this activity, the teacher explained the generic structures of the text called orientation, event, and resolution. In this activity, the teacher asked the students about the meanings of those generic structures. It was done to know the students' knowledge about those generic structures. The teacher then explained those generic structures one by one.

Having explained the definitions of those generic structures, the teacher continued to the next activity. In this activity, the teacher asked the students to read the text carefully to find out its text structure or generic structures of the text. Then the teacher asked the students to discuss with a partner to label the part of the text in the spaces provided. In doing this task, the students only labeled the parts of the text in the spaces provided concerning with the generic structures such as orientation, event, and resolution. The teacher continued to the next exercise. The teacher read the text and the students completed the blanks. Before completing the blanks, the teacher asked the students to copy the text into their own books. Having finished copying the text, the teacher read the text and the students completed the blanks. Based on the observation, all students were able to do the tasks. The results of texts written by the students in cycle I and cycle II are stated below.

Table 1. The Scores of Texts Written by the Students in Cycle I and Cycle II

No.	Indicators	Cycle I	Cycle II
1	The steps of rhetorical	67.50%	78.75%
2	Grammar	71.25%	78.75%
3	Vocabulary	66.25%	76.25%
4	Clarity of meaning	67.50%	87.50%
5	Relation between ideas	63.75%	81.25%
Mean		67.25%	80.69%

Table 1 shows the improvement of the students' writing skill through WhatsApp messenger. In cycle I, the percentage of scores covers steps of rhetorical (67.50%), grammar (71.25%), vocabulary (66.25%), clarity of meaning (67.50%), and relation between ideas (63.75%). In cycle II, the percentage of scores covers steps of rhetorical (78.75%), grammar (78.75%), vocabulary (76.25%), clarity of meaning (87.50%), and relation between ideas (81.25%). Based on this result, it could be stated that the results of students' writing in cycle II was better than in cycle I. Below is detailed improvement of the students' score in writing the text.
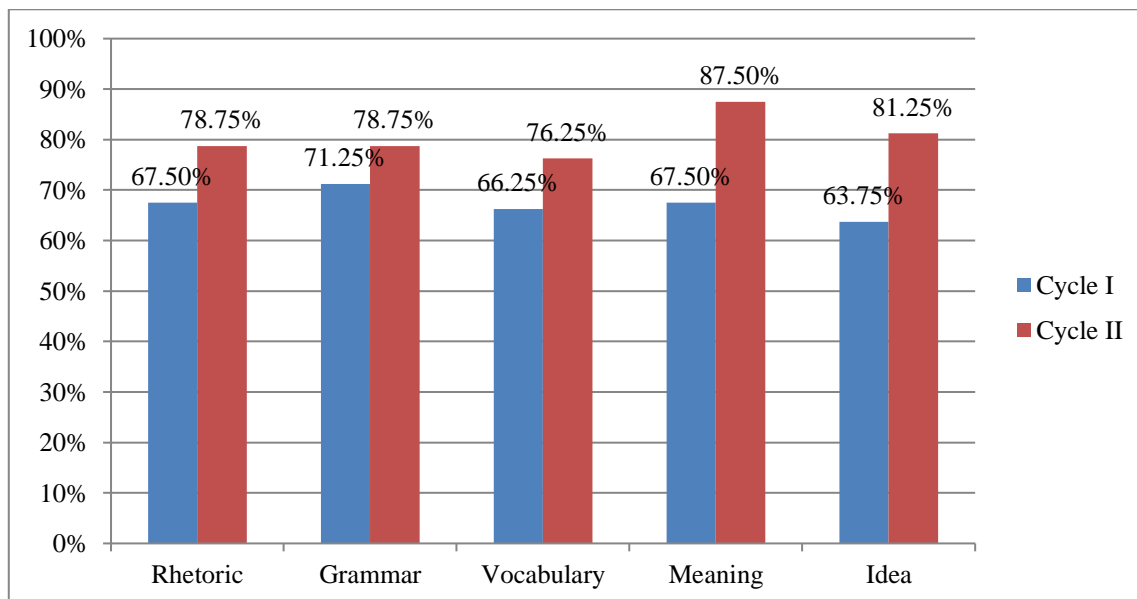
Figure. 1 The Scores of Descriptive Texts Written by the Students in Cycle I and Cycle II

Based on the results, it can be stated that the use of WhatsApp as a learning medium in students' writing skills in descriptive by teacher as well as the English teacher about the use of WhatsApp carried out by classroom teachers in learning activities which includes opening, core, and closing activities. Then the features that frequently used features of photos, videos, documents, WhatsApp groups, and calls (phone) directly. Ease of feeling with the presence of features WhatsApp and also its easy to use and can be used by various circles. Where after using the WhatsApp application there is an increase in student writing ability of descriptive text

According to Jain, Luaran, and Rahman (2016) WhatsApp is a useful learning tool that makes posting, sharing content and it makes the online discussions easy and available anywhere and anytime. As cited in Mistar (2016), it is one of the creative teaching media which is used to attract students' interest, attention and provides fun-based learning. WhatsApp allows the students to express thoughts and ideas via various features of the WhatsApp application platform, such as attaching pictures, sharing videos, sharing web-links, recording videos and many more. It can helps the students to get actively involved in learning activities via various features on this application. It is concluded that the WhatsApp features help the students in learning process.

The research conducted by Evyta Tri Handayani and Dyah Aminatun (2020) shows that teaching writing by using the WhatsApp group can bring positive effects and benefit during the teaching and learning writing at the junior high school. Besides that, it can also develop students' writing ability. This result is supported by students' opinions which state many good responses to this media rather than bad responses. Moreover, the result also shows that the WhatsApp group is one of the appropriate learning platforms for education in Indonesia.

Hasliani Wibowo, Andi Muhammad Yauri, Uswatun Hasanah (2021) also shows that the teacher implementation used of WhatsApp application in teaching writing was carried out by utilizing the features of the application, however the use of the WhatsApp

application was not optimal because it was recommended for teacher to make learning variations to attract students' interest in learning. According to students the used of this application can help in collecting assignments easily.

The benefits and challenges of the use of WhatsApp messenger to develop students' writing skills

The benefits of using WhatsApp messenger were; the students used their creativity in teaching and learning activity, the students were interested in teaching and learning processes, the students conveyed their assumptions in associating and networking freely. In contrast, it also had challenges in teaching and learning process. The benefits were; most of students were not enthusiastic to follow teaching and learning of WhatsApp messenger and the class did not have PowerPoint. The students must be persuaded to ask questions in questioning phase. The students must be directed to be disciplined in the classroom.

According to Jain, Luaran, and Rahman (2016) WhatsApp is a useful learning tool that makes posting, sharing content and it makes the online discussions easy and available anywhere and anytime. As cited in Mistar (2016), it is one of the creative teaching media which is used to attract students' interest, attention and provides fun-based learning. WhatsApp allows the students to express thoughts and ideas via various features of the WhatsApp application platform, such as attaching pictures, sharing videos, sharing web-links, recording videos and many more. It can help the students to get actively involved in learning activities via various features on this application.

Two major advantages of this app are its simplicity and low usage cost. It also enables learning beyond the classroom. The availability of teachers to students after school hours has made the learning process easier. Accessibility of learning materials, the possibility of learning any time and any place is the other feature of the app that encourages policy makers to use this app for teachers' development. It is concluded that the WhatsApp features help the students in learning process.

Based on the results of interviews and benefits by the results of the documentation, the use of WhatsApp for students' writing progress in text descriptions turned out to be an increase compared to before using WhatsApp. The reason is that they do not get bored easily using WhatsApp because teachers use the features provided by WhatsApp such as photos, videos, documents, WhatsApp groups, and calls (phone). With the features provided, it makes easier for teachers in the process learning. According to Barhomi (2015:223) the benefits of WhatsApp provides collaborative and collaborative learning facilities online between teachers and students or fellow students both at home and at school, a free application that is easy to use and can be used for sharing comments, posts, images, videos, sounds, and documents.

In line with the results of observation, the researcher also found some problems faced by the teacher and students in the teaching and learning processes. The teacher did not give suitable models of text to the students in teaching writing. In teaching writing, the teacher rarely discussed the texts about who wrote the text, why and where they were likely to be found. The teacher also rarely explained the social function and purpose of the text being discussed. In constructing the text, there was no negotiation between teacher and students and among the students about the text. The teacher rarely helped the students in re-drafting and editing the texts. The teacher did not check the students'

text editing. The students did not have enough vocabulary and they did not know the meaning of the words. The students were confused to start writing because they did know how to express their idea, and to use proper words in writings. The students could not spelling, punctuation the word when the teacher asked them to write.

CONCLUSION

The study reports that (1) there was an improvement of the students' recount text writing skill through scientific approach. In cycle I, the percentage of scores covers steps of rhetorical was (67.50%), grammar (71.25%), vocabulary (66.25%), clarity of meaning (67.50%), and relation between ideas (63.75%). In cycle II, the percentage of scores covers steps of rhetorical was (78.75%), grammar (78.75%), vocabulary (76.25%), clarity of meaning (87.50%), and relation between ideas (81.25%). (2) The benefits of using WhatsApp messenger were; the students used their creativity in teaching and learning activity, were interested in teaching and learning processes, and conveyed their assumptions in associating and networking freely. In contrast, it also had challenges in teaching and learning processes. The challenges were; most of students were not enthusiastic to follow teaching and learning of WhatsApp messenger. They must be persuaded to ask questions in questioning phase and they must be directed to be disciplined in the classroom.

After analyzing the data from the research, the researcher found that the use of WhatsApp messenger in teaching writing is necessary. Therefore, the writer would like to propose some suggestions. It is important to the students to increase their competence through important activities. They should learn writing by their own ways. They should also improve their knowledge in the teaching and learning process through writing activities. The teachers should improve their competence especially the knowledge of WhatsApp messenger and the teaching skills. In addition, to improve the knowledge of subject matter and teaching skills, they need to pay attention to their personality. They have to maintain and perform good characters, attitudes, and behaviors in front of the class.

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