

**THE IMPACT OF WHATSAPP GROUP ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'  
WRITING IN THE INDONESIAN TERTIARY CONTEXT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The popularity of WhatsApp Group in the academic major has raised the interest of researchers and practitioners in exploring its potential benefit in teaching EFL aspects. This present paper attempts to investigate whether the use of WhatsApp Group as a learning media might enhance undergraduate students' writing ability. It also explores the problems affecting the use of WhatsApp Group in writing class. There were fifty-eight undergraduate students who participated in this study. They enrolled in the writing course and were in the third semester in the academic years of 2018/2019. The subjects were randomly assigned into two groups, experimental group and control group. The research data were collected using pretest-posttest design and interview. The results of t-test scores indicated that WhatsApp Group significantly outperformed the students' writing performance. Furthermore, there were technical, education, and instruction problems dealing with the use of WhatsApp Group to improve the students' readiness to participate in writing activities. Thus, WhatsApp Group is considered as a potential alternative of an instructional media for educational purposes to bring beneficial to students' knowledge of language and to help the students to work independently and cooperate with the others.*

**Keywords:** *educational purposes, students' writing, WhatsApp Group*

**INTRODUCTION**

In education field, digital communication through social networking applications has become

popular among the groups of students and between teacher and student. Social networking applications which are mostly used and accessed by the students are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and others cross platform. Each of these tools has different and special features and/or characteristics that affect its suitability for learning purposes (Calvo, Arbiol, & Iglesias, 2014). These social networking application also are designed to run on mobile devices through smartphone and tablets (Karpisek, Baggili, & Breitinger, 2015).

Smartphone is one of new platforms for language teaching since it offers flexibility in case of time and place, more user-friendly, and easy to access (Demouy & Kukulska-Hulme, 2010; Kukulska-Hulme, 2012; Bensalem, 2018). It also has been an effective medium for exchanging learning content to students during and after the class (Thornton & Houser, 2005). Nowadays, most students tend to enjoy accessing their smartphone anytime and anywhere. They seem to have positive attitudes to use smartphone in their language learning because they can obtain learning materials easily and practice the language flexibly (Chen, Hsieh, & Kinshuk, 2008).

The widespread of social-networking applications and smartpone popularity has raised the growing supports and interests from researchers, practitioners, and language educators to use them in the teaching and learning environment. WhatsApp becomes the popular cross-platform application to be explored in teaching certain aspects of foreign language learning. WhatsApp is an instant messenger application that allows the users to text and call as well as share the contents to each other in any form of image, document, location, contact, video, and audio (Bensalem, 2018). It also allows users to create a group chat to communicate within its boundaries. Besides, there are some beneficial functions of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning environment such as time saving and ease in increasing intensive interaction between teacher and student, distributing teaching materials, submitting the assignment, and up-to-dating classroom activities (Cifuentes & Lents, 2011; Lauricella & Kay, 2013; Fattah, 2015; Awada, 2016).

The previous studies show the progressive increase in conducting researches on the use of WhatsApp in the writing class (Allagui, 2014; Awada, 2016; Maria, 2016; Susanti & Tarmuji, 2016). Therefore, this present study aims to examine whether there is impact of the use of WhatsApp Group in the students' writing ability. This study also explores the encountered problems from the students and language educator that affect the use of WhatsApp Group in writing class. As this phenomenon is relatively popular and has not been investigated thoroughly, the writers intend to conduct this research.

This current study was based on a mixed-method design. The study population was constituted by all students enrolled in the writing course, namely secretarial correspondence.

There were sixty-four undergraduate students in the third semester in the academic years of 2018/2019, majoring English Literature, Faculty of Arts and Education, Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia. The subjects were randomly assigned into two groups, experimental group and control group. In the experimental group, there were thirty-two students. Meanwhile, thirty-two students were in the control class. The research data were collected using pretest-posttest design to examine whether the results are significant or not and interview to find out the problem affecting the optimalization of using WhatsApp Group in their writing class.

During the treatment, the teacher combined the process of writing into planning, drafting stage, revising, and editing phases (Kroll, 2001) and digital learning with WhatsApp Group as the medium to facilitate the students' learning writing towards the secretarial correspondence documents they have composed. The students' writing assignment were analyzed by the scoring criteria adapted from Hughes (2003) with the aspects of content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics, ranging score from 0-100. Then, the students' work were graded by multiple rater to ensure the test reliability of the inter-rater. There were several statistical analyses used such as normality test and homogeneity test that were analyzed using SPSS (ver.16). Furthermore, the following hypotheses were also tested using its software.

$H_0$  = There is no significant difference of writing ability between experimental group and control group.

$H_1$  = There is a significant difference of writing ability between experimental group and control group.

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

The current study aims at investigating whether the use of WhatsApp Group as a learning media might enhance undergraduate students' writing ability. It also explores the problems affecting the use of WhatsApp Group in writing class. The subjects in the experimental group and control group were assigned to write one of office letters such as letters of payments, personal business letters, electronic mails, and media letters in the pre-test and post-test. The impact of WhatsApp Group can be seen the difference of student's writing ability between the experimental group and the control group.

**Table 1. The Comparison Between the Experimental Group and Control Group in Pre-Test**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>SD</b>
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Experimental Group	62.90	50	87	10.35
Control Group	57.88	28	84	13.89

From the table 1, it showed that the students treated in the experimental group and in the control group had relatively equal ability. It can be seen that the mean score of the experimental group was 62,90. Meanwhile, the mean score of the control group was 57,88. After the treatments, the post-test was administered for both groups. The result of post-test can be seen in the table 2.

**Table 2. The Comparison Between the Experimental Group and Control Group in Post-Test**

Group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
Experimental Group	74.23	69	92	6.12
Control Group	73	60	90	9.58

Table 2 showed that the students treated using WhatsApp Group in the experimental group outperformed the students treated in the control group. It is clearly seen that the mean score of the experimental group was 74.23 and the mean score of the control group was 73. As the means from the two groups were slightly different, the results might be counted as an indication of the impact of WhatsApp Group on the students' writing.

Furthermore, the formulated hypotheses were tested to find out whether there is any significant difference of writing ability between the experimental group and the control group. The result of the hypothesis testing might be seen in the table 3.

**Table 3. the Result of Independent t-test**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
<b>Students' Writing Score</b>	Equal variances assumed	3.273	.075	5.130	62	.000	10.312	2.010	6.294	14.331
	Equal variances not assumed			5.130	52.671	.000	10.312	2.010	6.280	14.345

From table 3, the result pointed out that the experimental group and control group were different significantly at .000 ( $t = 5.13$ ) in which the result was below  $\alpha$  (0.05). It was also found out that the mean difference between the experimental group and control group was 10.312 with the degree of freedom 62. Based on this result, the null ( $H_0$ ) hypothesis was rejected and in other words, there is a significant difference of writing ability between the experimental and control group. Thus, it is indicated that WhatsApp Group significantly outperformed the students' writing performance.

Furthermore, to find out the problems faced by the students and teacher when they used the WhatsApp Group in the writing course, an open-ended interview was conducted. From the interview, it was found out that there were technical, education, and instruction problems dealing with the use of WhatsApp Group to improve the students' readiness to participate in writing activities.

Hence, the results show that the use of WhatsApp Group displays more positive impact to the students' writing ability than didactic lecture in the control group. The results of these study might support the several related studies conducted by (Allagui, 2014; Awada, 2016; Maria, 2016; Susanti & Tarmuji, 2016).

The use of WhatsApp Group as the learning media might provide an opportunity for the students to practice their writing ability. In the experimental group, the students were asked to read the uploaded writing material in the WhatsApp Group and begin to write the outline of the office letters. After that, they were assigned to write it completely and share the file in the group. To improve the students' awareness of content and organization, they were given the clear instructions and training practice during the treatments. Thus, the students' writing ability in the experimental group improve significantly since the teacher shared the complete writing materials through the WhatsApp Group and provides the feedback constructively for the individual writing assignment.

## CONCLUSION

In the light of findings, WhatsApp Group might be used as a learning media to help language learners to acquire the needed language skills. WhatsApp Group, thus, is considered as a popular instructional media in the teaching and learning environment because the use of its gains the beneficial to students' knowledge of language and to help the students to work independently and cooperate with the others. Furthermore, this current study is counted as a preliminary study so the effectiveness of the techniques should be explored and analyzed

from the further empirical trial.

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