THE EFFECTS OF WHATSAPP IN TEACHING NARRATIVE WRITING: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study aims to identify the effects of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing to Grade 6of primary school pupils in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar.

Methodology: Eight pupils of Grade 6 from one primary school in Negeri Sembilan were involved and data were collected through document analysis, focus group interviews and field notes.

Main Findings: The findings of the post-test revealed that the vocabulary aspect has significantly improved as 75% of the participants showed an increase of one and two marks while the aspect of grammar was not found to have any effect as only one participant who represented 12% of the participants showed slight improvement from 12 to 13 marks.

Applications of this study: The findings of this study are hoped to shed some light on how the educators could manipulate the functions of mobile messaging apps in teaching English particularly the skill of writing.

Novelty/Originality of study: The pupils' motivation to learn narrative writing could be enhanced through the use of WhatsApp rather than writing conventionally using pencil and paper.

Keywords: Education, Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), Narrative writing, WhatsApp.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four language skills that should be mastered by language learners, including foreign learners(Rahmawati et al. 2019). It is often been perceived as one of the most challenging and complex skills to master, even it is to be acquired and learned in one's native language (Falciola et al. 2014 cited in Chiew & Nurhidayah, 2016). Muhammad Fareed et al. (2016)discussed that writing is considered a complex skill as it requires a cognitive process which tests memory, thinking ability and verbal command in expressing ideas. Basma (2013) elaborated that writing requires pupils to draw on many skills simultaneously as they must write, think and compose with appropriate grammar and accurate spelling. Narrowing down to second and foreign language writing, being proficient in writing could be a challenge for foreign writers as it involves more than constructing grammatically correct forms and with less language knowledge and confidence, often lead them to struggle with the writing skills in general (Nooreiny et al., 2011). This is supported by Novitasari et al. (2018) as writing is a difficult skill to be acquired by foreign learners as it requires different kinds of abilities depending on the type of writing. Based on the review of past studies, Mastan et al. (2017) concluded that among the common problems faced by second-language writers of English include the inability to generate ideas in the L2, inaccurate use of grammar, insufficient vocabulary as well as lack of exposure to various kinds of effective writing strategies.

Writing in the Malaysian Context

In the context Malaysian education system, the aim of the English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools is to develop pupils' ability to write various types of texts using appropriate language, style and form through the use of various media. For the summative assessment, writing is tested as one of the compulsory subjects in the national examination, Primary School Assessment Test (UPSR) for the Grade 6 pupils. However, it is argued that the proficiency of English among Malaysian children is on the decline despite learning English as a second language for at least six years at the primary level and yet, they are still weak in English, especially the writing skills (Chan et al. 2018). Moreover, research shows that most Malaysian learners are moderate users of writing strategies (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013 cited in Mastan et al. 2017). Studies conducted by Saadiyah and Kaladevi (2009) and Erma Farida and Maslawati (2018) identified six common errors found in the writing of Malaysian learners; singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice, preposition, subject-verb agreement and word order while the use of articles, subject-verb agreement and copula 'be' are the three most frequent errors detected. Correspondingly, Swaran Singh et al. (2017) pointed out that students' inability to write well could be due to insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules and concept while first language (L1) interference is observed by Ghabool et al. (2012) as they considered it as very tangible in writing. Normazidah et al. (2012) highlighted that the native language has significant influence over the learning of English which includes the wrong use of English grammatical rules, morphology, and syntax. Apart from that, Nooreiny et al. (2011) argued that in writing classes, pupils often submit the first writing drafts as the final products as time constraints, a large number of pupils, the absence of writing practice and lack of motivation were identified as the obstacles.

The Use of WhatsApp in Writing

Based on the writing problems discussed earlier, there is a crucial need to find innovative ways to support and hopefully improve the writing of the pupils by extending language learning and instruction outside of the classroom. Hence, teachers should be able to assist students in understanding the demands to accomplish a writing task by providing opportunities for more exposure to English writing, (Sulistyo et al, 2019). Therefore, one of the ways is employed in this study which is the implementation of WhatsApp, a mobile messaging app to teach narrative writing in the virtual environment. Graham and Perin (2007) cited in Muhammad Fareed et al. (2016) emphasized that students' writing ability could be improved by fostering their interest, motivation, and enjoyment for writing through the use of technology. The use of mobile technology could support the second language learning as experiencing mobile learning would offer the pupils with access to vast and various types of learning materials in the internet, meaningful collaborative learning environment as well as immediate feedback from teachers and peers (Ahmad & Love 2013). As the usage of WhatsApp requires the connection of Internet, Febriani and Nur Hafifah (2019) identified that the Internet is an example of frequently used technology in an educational institution as it offers language learners with wide arrays of materials that could enhance the language learning process.

The use of WhatsApp as the intervention for the teaching of narrative writing in this study could suit the learning needs of the 'Digital Natives' as the pupils in the 21st-century era are the members of Generation Z and Alpha. The term 'Digital Natives' is referred to the "native speakers of the digital language of computer games, email, internet, mobile phones and instant messaging"(Prensky, 2001). In this study, the participants are Grade 6 pupils and in the Malaysian education system, Grade 6 pupils are 12-year-old children of the current year and they are born in the year 2006 which places them as Generation Z (Gen Z). Gen Z is born between 1995 to 2012 and this generation grows up witnessing the widespread of electronic gadgets and digital technologies that characterized them as generation of tech-savvy and globally connected in the virtual world (Anjali, 2014). Therefore, in this study, WhatsApp allows them to learn at anytime and anywhere without the need to present physically and they could manipulate the connectivity of WhatsApp through the discussion and feedback received from the teacher and peers in the WhatsApp group. In addition, the implementation of WhatsApp is aligned with the aim of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which is to optimize the integration of technology in enhancing the learning process as the Ministry of Education believes that technology has tremendous potential to accelerate wide range of knowledge and thinking skills.

In reviewing the past studies on the teaching of English writing through the use of WhatsApp, most of the studies took place in the setting of secondary and tertiary context and to date, there has been very limited research conducted in the primary school context. Therefore, this study attempted to identify the effects of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing to Grade 6 primary school pupils in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar. The topic of narrative writing is a bully. Data were gathered to answer the following research questions;

1. How does WhatsApp affect the vocabulary of the pupils' narrative writing on the topic of a bully?
2. How does WhatsApp affect the grammar of the pupils' narrative writing on the topic of a bully?

The following sections discuss related literature, methodology, the findings and discussions as well as the implications of the study that could significantly impact the teaching and learning process on English writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructivist Theory

This study is grounded based on the theory of constructivist, which is divided into two primary perspectives namely cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Eggen and Kauchak (2010) outlined four characteristics of this theory that influence learning which include the construction of familiar and logical knowledge, dependency of new learning on current understanding, the significance of social interaction in facilitating learning as well as the occurrence of meaningful learning within real-world tasks.

For cognitive constructivism, this theory could occur when the pupils discover appropriate examples of the bully as well as the meaning of words independently through the searching of relevant images and vocabulary via the internet and dictionary apps rather than having the information presented by the teacher-researcher or other experts. For social constructivism, this theory could occur when the pupils developed their knowledge on vocabulary and sentence construction through social interaction and corrective feedback given by the teacher-researcher and other participants in the WhatsApp group as well as being significantly aware on the topic of a bully as a direct result of the exchanged information in the WhatsApp group. Extending from the social constructivism theory, learners benefit most from the interaction with a more knowledgeable other when they are working in their zone of proximal development or ZPD, (Eggen & Kauchak 2010). Roosevelt (2008) cited in Shabani et al. (2010) discussed that the aim of this theory is to retain learners in their own ZPDs as frequent as possible by providing problem-solving tasks that are slightly difficult. Thus, in order to complete the tasks, they are required to collaborate with another more competent peer or with a teacher or adult. The purpose of promoting this kind of collaboration is to ensure that the learner would possibly be able to complete the same task individually in the future thus, the learner's ZPD for that particular task could be significantly raised.

Writing Components & Narrative Writing

Writing consists of five components; content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics (Salikin & Tahir, 2017). Similarly, Rahmawati et al. (2019) discussed that the assessment of writing competence could be analytically determined by five components which are grammatical, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency which refers to style and ease of communication as well as form or organization. For this study, it only focused on two components which are vocabulary and language use (grammar). Chen and Wu (2019) discussed that vocabulary is crucial for the learning of the whole English system, thus plays the most fundamental and core role in English teaching process. Baharudin et al. (2019) further explained that vocabulary knowledge requires not only word meanings knowledge, but also the usage of the words in the appropriate context and in a natural way. As emphasized by Schmitt (2000) cited in Hashemifardnia et al. (2018), "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language". Therefore, Basal et al. (2016) emphasized that vocabulary teaching is crucial in developing proficiency and achieving competence in the target language. This is corroborated with Md. Yunus and Abdul Razak (2016) that ESL students need to acquire at least a sufficient amount of words in order to enhance the acquisition of the target language. On the other hand, grammar is defined as the rules of a language, which governs the way words are arranged and sentences are constructed in order to convey meaning in variety of contexts thus, ideas and intentions could be delivered efficiently and meaningfully(Nesamalar et al., 2005). Syed Ahmad et al. (2018) explained that students should learn grammar in order to acquire grammatical competence as this competence is part of communicative competence that may enable students to deliver words and structures precisely according to the context.

For narrative writing, it is defined as a real or fictitious story writing or report of events, personal experiences or any similar incidents (Ahmed, 2015). Narrative writing contains a sequence of events which includes characters and setting (Nesamalar et al., 2005). Gibbons (2002) further elaborated that narratives have a purpose which may be to entertain or teach and contains a particular organizational structure that consists of orientation, events, complication, and resolution. Gibbons further elaborated that narratives, like all text types, have a purpose which may be to entertain or teach and narratives have a particular organizational structure that consists of orientation, events, complication, and resolution. For orientation, its purpose is to set the scene, introduce the characters and provide some details of who, when and where. Then, there are a number of events that lead to conflicts in the story which are referred to as complications. Finally, the problem or conflict is resolved in the final part of the story, which is the resolution. There are also typical linguistic features common to narratives. First, narratives are sequenced in time and often signaled by the conjunctions or connectives such as *one day*, *the next morning* and *finally*. Second, the tense use is usually past tense as narratives often narrate events that have already happened. Third, narratives use action verbs that describe what people do such as *walked*, *saw* and *went*. Lastly, narratives contain dialogue and "saying" verbs that explain how people speak such as *said*, *told* and *reported*. In this study, the topic of WhatsApp discussion revolved on 'bully' in which the pupils discussed on the scene of bully, the characters in the scene, the events that lead to bully and the complications as well as the resolution which stopped the bullying.

M-learning

As stated in the previous section, the purpose of this study is to identify the effects of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar. The use of WhatsApp as the intervention tool reflects the mobile learning concept or m-learning. M-learning is the latest discovery in the development of e-learning and distance learning and it refers to the capabilities that mobile technology devices have significantly impacted a physical classroom context as well as to the activities of students as they participate in the learning process (Vázquez-Cano, 2014). The increased use of wireless technologies in education which includes computers and mobile devices aims at revolutionizing education and transforming the conventional classroom environment into any time and anywhere learning (Said, 2015). M-learning provides the opportunity for a student-centered approach in acquiring, processing and using information as well as increased interactivity between teachers and students (Ibrahim & Kadiri 2018). As technologies are developing rapidly, mobile devices have also become more affordable, effective and easy to use as they could further manipulate the advantages of e-learning system (Ahmad & Love, 2013). The implications of m-learning have a significant contribution to the field of language teaching as MALL is then introduced. MALL is an acronym for mobile-assisted language learning and it is defined as "an approach to language learning that is assisted or enhanced through the use of a handheld mobile device" (Valarmathi, 2011). MALL is a subset of m-learning and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and could support the retention and utilization of language skills acquired by the language learners (Burston, 2013). In the context of English language learning, Harwati et al. (2017) elaborated that the mobile phone is could be an excellent tool for the practices of English vocabulary and communication. This is supported by Hao et al. (2018) as mobile technology could significantly improve the language learning process due to the affordances and portability the technology may offer as it could reduce the students' anxiety by allowing them to practice the language without the need for face-to-face interaction as well as develop daily reading habits.

WhatsApp

One example of m-learning is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a cross-platform messaging app with a focus on privacy, security, and speed (Basma, 2013). WhatsApp acts as a platform of sending and receiving messages to and from individuals or groups in a form of text messages, images, audio, video files as well as web addresses, (Linda & Ida, 2018). Tartari et al.

(2019) added that this type of technological platform offers real-time approach, communication synchronicity as well as the sharing of authentic and creative work.

For this study, WhatsApp is chosen for several reasons. First, WhatsApp is a free messaging app with no ads and subscription fees thus; it would not burden the pupils as they are not bound to any contract of use. Second, WhatsApp provides the accessibility to send and receive messages via groups created thus, for this study, the discussion of the narrative writing is conducted in the group as the pupils could send to and receive feedback from the teacher-researcher and other group members simultaneously. Third, WhatsApp has no limits on the size of media thus, allows users to share and exchange the unlimited number of photos, videos and any files of any format of up to 2GB each. Thus, the pupils could share variety types of files without the need to convert into certain format. For example, the pupils could easily share the screenshots of the meaning of words taken from the dictionary app into the WhatsApp group. Another interesting feature available in WhatsApp that could engage the pupils in the learning of narrative writing is the use of emoji. Sabrina and Benedictus (2017) defined emoji as an image that could express facial expression and gestures as well as concrete images. The use of emoji in the context of this study functioned as a motivational tool for the pupils such as the 'applause' and 'thumb up' emoji was used to compliment the pupils. Hence, by providing such emojis, the pupils' affective filter could be reduced and lead to long-term retention on the vocabulary and grammar learning. The use of emoji is corroborated with the study by Saadat and Dastgerdi (2014) as the instructors of writing courses are recommended to provide appropriate positive responses since their feedback can be vitally constructive in the learners' developmental process of writing. In addition, Bernama (2017) reported that Malaysians are the world's largest users of WhatsApp at 77%. The report stated that this app has become the main messaging app among Malaysians due to its simplicity, speed in communication and information sharing, as well as effective interaction as notifications, could be sent without limitation, thus saving cost. Hence, due to the suitable features as well as the significant use of WhatsApp in Malaysia, WhatsApp is chosen in this study to facilitate the teaching of narrative writing about bully in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar.

Past Studies

Several studies have been conducted involving secondary and tertiary students in the teaching of English writing particularly on the aspect of vocabulary and grammar through WhatsApp. The study by Andujar (2016) yielded positive results as experimental illustrated major improvements on the number of errors in the aspect of grammatical, lexical and mechanical on 80 Spanish ESL third-year students' writing development. Similarly, the experimental group outperformed the control group in punctuation marks, sentence structures and vocabulary on the writing skills of 30 second-year college students (Said, 2015). Findings by Çetinkaya and Sütçü (2018)on 123 ninth grade students found that significant achievement of the students in WhatsApp group as compared with the other groups thus, it indicated that the implementation of WhatsApp as a support to traditional learning environment could be considered effective in improving the English vocabulary learning. Similarly, the findings in the study by Hashemifardnia et al. (2018) on 50 Iranian tertiary students showed that the students who received instruction through WhatsApp had better performance on vocabulary learning as compared to those who were trained traditionally. Correspondingly, the results of t-test scores in the study by Bensalem (2018) indicated significant performance of WhatsApp group on a vocabulary test of 40 EFL university students thus, concluded that WhatsApp has significantly increased learners' vocabulary learning. The study by Bataineh et al. (2018)reveal statistically significant differences in the participants' paraphrasing and summarizing skills thus, confirmed the potential effectiveness of e-mail and WhatsApp as catalysts for paraphrasing and summarizing on 45 Jordanian EFL tenth-grade students. Nevertheless, one study was found conducted in primary school setting by Ali et al. (2018) and they concluded significant difference between the experimental and control group of100 Grade 5 EFL students hence, the finding suggested that the teaching of grammar through mobile phones has a positive impact on the learners' grammar.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach that specifically implemented a case study as the research design.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in one primary school located in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The school was selected due to its location on the outskirts of town and the majority of the pupils have limited access to the use of English outside of the classroom such as English extra classes, thus they are only depending on the English lessons in school for the learning of the language. In the aspect of language proficiency, the proficiency level of the pupils in this study is at A2 level as according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) descriptors. Darmi et al. (2017) explained that A2 level refers to elementary English users who are able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions, communicate in simple and routine tasks as well as describe oneself in simple terms. The selection criteria of the participants are Grade 6 pupils age 12 years old and they must own a Smartphone with mobile subscription and WhatsApp account as well as their parents consented them to use the smartphone for the learning of narrative writing. Eight Year 6 pupils, consisted of four boys (B1, B2, B3, B4) and four girls (G1, G2, G3, G4) were selected as the participants and all of them are Malay. In terms of maturity level, children from 12 years onwards are able to combine ideas logically, think about possibilities rather than just reality and solve problems using scientific reasoning (O'Reilly et al., 2013) thus, at this age, the pupils of this study are assumed to possess a better level of maturity in understanding the functions and features of WhatsApp in the narrative writing process.

Data Collection Tools

Three data collection tools were used in this study; document analysis (DA), focus group interviews (FGI) and researcher's field notes (RFN). In this study, two documents were used for DA; the writing scripts of the pupils in both pre-test and post-test as well as the WhatsApp conversation thread. The documents were analyzed in order to track any progress of the pupils' narrative writing after the intervention of WhatsApp in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar. For FGI, its main aim is to retrieve an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of the pupils on the use of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing. For RFN, the teaching of narrative writing using WhatsApp in this study was not solely conducted in the virtual environment, as there were also times when the teacher-researcher was present physically with the pupils. During these times, the focus of the teacher-researcher was to observe the facial expressions, reactions, and engagement of the pupils.

Data Collection Procedure

The procedure for the data collection occurred in four phases for four weeks. In Phase 1 (Week 1), upon receiving the guardian's consent, the pupils were briefed on the purpose and duration of the study before proceeded to pre-test. In the pre-test, the pupils answered one essay question on the topic 'bully in the canteen' based on the format of Section C in UPSR Writing paper. The pre-test was conducted in a classroom with an examination seating arrangement. The duration of the test was 40 minutes and administered by the teacher-researcher. Phase 2 (Week 2-3) in the intervention phase with approximately 23-hour of total engagement. In this phase, the teacher-researcher created a WhatsApp group and prior to the virtual discussion, the teacher-researcher conducted a physical group discussion to explain the functions available and features of WhatsApp, the rules and regulations of the WhatsApp group as well as requested all the pupils to download at least one dictionary app in their Smartphone. After 2-week of intervention, the pupils sat for the post-test in Phase 3 (Week 4). The question of the post-test was similar to in the pre-test which was marked by the same external examiner in Phase 1 and later followed by the interview. In Phase 4, data analysis then began.

WhatsApp Intervention

The WhatsApp intervention of this study adopted 'The Curriculum Cycle' introduced by Derewianka (1990) cited in Gibbons (2002). This Cycle outlines four stages of writing lessons with each stage has a particular teaching purpose discussing the topic of the bully.

Stage 1: Building the field

This stage aims to build sufficient background knowledge of the writing topic in order to ensure that the pupils would be able to write about it. The pupils would search for relevant images related to bullying on the internet and shared the images in the WhatsApp group. Then, the discussion revolved on identifying the types of bully shown in the images and elaborating on the factors that lead to bully.

Stage 2: Modelling the text type

This stage aims to develop an understanding of the purpose, overall structure and language features of the particular text type. Two notes expansion which contains pictures and related vocabulary on the topic of 'bully in the library' and 'bully in the lavatory' were used to model the text type.

Stage 3: Joint construction

This stage is teacher-guided which aims to illustrate the process of writing a text, emphasizing the content and language of the writing. Sentences were constructed by the pupils based on the questions and prompt posed by the teacher. Any errors in the sentences would be immediately discussed and corrected by the teacher and other group members.

Stage 4: Independent writing

This final stage of the cycle aims at producing individual text. After the correction has been made based on the teacher's and others' feedback, the pupils were instructed to send their individual essays to the teacher's number, not in the WhatsApp group.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively which involved two main phases; document analysis and data transcription. For document analysis, the writing scripts of both pre and post-test were marked by a qualified examiner appointed by the Malaysia Examination Syndicate who has 3-year of experience in marking UPSR papers, focusing on the aspect of vocabulary and grammar. The analytic scale for rating composition tasks by Brown and Bailey (1984) cited in Brown (2004) was used as the marking guidelines. The range of marks given is from 1 to 20 with 1-5 marks is regarded as 'unacceptable', 6-11 is categorized as 'weak', 12-14 is categorized as 'adequate', 15-17 is regarded as 'good' and 18-20 is regarded as 'excellent'. For data transcription, the verbal statement of each respondent that has been recorded after the interview session was transcribed verbatim. The transcription was then analyzed in searching for patterns and themes on the pupils' perception of the effects of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing.

Validity & Reliability

In order to ensure the validity of this study, the data from all the three data instruments were triangulated in order to check for consistency and similarity. Apart from that, as this study employed the use of the smartphone as the research tool and all the participants are considered as children, only those who volunteered and have been granted permission from the parents or guardians based on the consent form were chosen as participants. The interview questions were also sent to the expert with 25 years of teaching English for validation before conducting the interview session. For the reliability aspect, the interview transcriptions and researcher's field notes were returned to the participants in order for them to review and check the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. By reviewing the interview transcriptions and field notes, the possibilities of misinterpretation of the participants' behavior during the observations, biases, and lack of data could be significantly reduced. Apart from that, the writing scripts of both pre and post-test were marked by a qualified examiner appointed by the Malaysia Examination Syndicate who has 3-year of experience in marking UPSR papers using the analytic scale for rating composition tasks by Brown and Bailey (1984).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How does WhatsApp affect the vocabulary of the pupils' narrative writing on the topic of the bully?

In the aspect of vocabulary, Figure 1 shows the result of the pre and post-test of the pupils. The figure revealed that six pupils or 75% of them were able to score one or two marks higher in their post-test. B1 and B4 progressed from 10 to 11 marks in the post-test while G1 and G4 improved from 13 to 14 marks. Meanwhile, B2 and B4 have scored two marks higher in their post-test from 11 to 13 marks and 10 to 12 marks respectively. On the other hand, decreased in marks was observed on the other two of the pupils or 25% of them. The two pupils, G2 and G3 showed a slight decrease in their post-test marks with two marks different, from 14 to 12 marks.
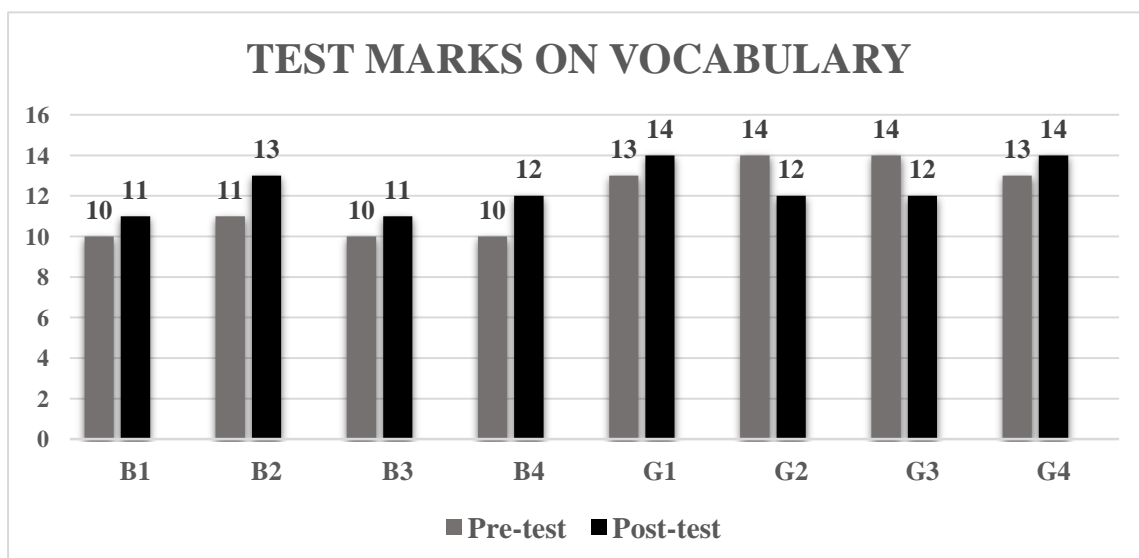

Figure 1: Post-test marks on vocabulary

The progress made by 75% of the pupils could be due to their effort in using the e-dictionary apps in their mobile phones to look for the meaning of words which then shared the screenshot of the words in the WhatsApp group. Another significant factor could be due to immediate feedback provided by the teacher-researcher and other members of the WhatsApp group on the appropriate words that should be used in the context of their narrative writing. This interaction occurred when the teacher and other group members corrected the pupils' sentences or suggested relevant words to be used in the sentences. The pupils would then amend the sentences almost instantly before posting back the corrected sentences into the WhatsApp to be learned by other group members. Hence, the pupils were able to construct their own understanding of the vocabulary which then contributed to their long-term retention as proved in the post-test marks. This finding is corroborated with the study by Hashemifardnia et al. (2018) as they concluded that mobile phones and mobile applications in teaching vocabulary allow the students to learn beyond classroom borders as online chatting could facilitate the development of the students' interactive competence thus, this virtual interaction resulted in learning vocabulary more easily and effectively. Apart of that, this study has also supported the finding by Bataineh et al. (2018) when their study proved that the group chats feature of WhatsApp has enabled the participants of this group to receive similar input simultaneously hence, facilitated their collaboration in practicing paraphrasing and summarizing especially in finding appropriate synonymous and linking words. Similarly, Said (2015) discussed that WhatsApp technology could promote students' active collaboration in the EFL classroom as it provides the opportunity for free language practice especially vocabulary learning as well as to relate their opinions to those of others in discussing the vocabulary of the writing.

The following example shows the sentences written by G1 in the pre and post-test;

Pre-test:

Suddenly, the discipline teacher saw and discipline teacher call their name to come in his room.

Post-test:

*The discipline teacher saw **the incident** and the discipline wanted to punish the three boys…*

In the pre-test, the sentence was incomplete as there was no object to complement the verb 'saw'. This could be due to the fact that G1 did not know or was unsure about the appropriate word that should be used. A significant improvement was then observed in the post-test as she used the word 'incident' to refer to the situation that the discipline teacher was seeing. The word 'incident' was discussed in the WhatsApp group when one pupil used the word 'case' to refer to the situation. The teacher-researcher instantly provided two options of word, 'case' and 'incident', which signaled the other members of the group to quickly look for the meaning of 'incident' in the dictionary app. Two of the pupils then shared the meaning of 'incident' in Malay as *'kejadian'*, as shown in Figure 2. Thus, G1 translated her understanding by inserting the word 'incident' in the post-test writing as she understood that 'incident' is an accurate word to refer to the situation between the bully and the victim.

Figure 2: WhatsApp thread

The following example shows the sentences written by G4 in the pre and post-test;

Pre-test:

Lastly, they will be punished by discipline teachers.

Post-test:

*The discipline teacher wants to punish the bully. The bully **apologized** to Kamal and Faris. They were **forgiven** him.*

In the pre-test, G4 ended the story by only stating the action taken by the discipline teacher which is punishing the bully. A significant improvement was then observed in the post-test when G4 used the word 'apologize' to refer to the action of the bully as he expressed his regret for his misconduct towards the victim. It was then followed by the word 'forgive' referring to the response of the bully-victim as he ceased to feel the resentment against the bully which implicitly informs the readers that one should be given another chance after making mistakes instead of being resented by others. The improvement in the vocabulary showed by G4 in the post-test could be due to the discussion in the WhatsApp group as the word 'apologize' appeared in the note expansion provided by the teacher-researcher and the pupils constructed sentences using the word 'apologize' as shown in Figure 3. In Figure 3, it shows that based on the teacher researcher's response, G4 has successfully grasped the meaning of the word as well as its appropriate use in the sentence which was then translated into her post-test. For the word 'forgive', it is not included in the note expansion, thus G4 might have independently searched for the word in the e-dictionary app.

The progress made by the pupils in the aspect of vocabulary is also corroborated with their positive response gathered from FGI. The majority of the pupils responded that WhatsApp was useful for vocabulary enhancement as they were able to learn and gain new vocabulary through the sharing of new words in the WhatsApp group. The positive response shown by the pupils in this study is aligned with the findings by Çetinkaya and Sütçü (2018) as they claimed that WhatsApp could enhance the English vocabulary instruction and students would be inclined positively towards WhatsApp as compared with Facebook. Therefore, the potential of WhatsApp of being a significant technological tool for the interaction in language learning should be explored further. Similarly, Linda and Ida (2018) discussed that positive responses shown by the participants indicated that the use of WhatsApp in writing could significantly enhance the students' enthusiasm in learning as well as increase the ability to produce and write a good text.
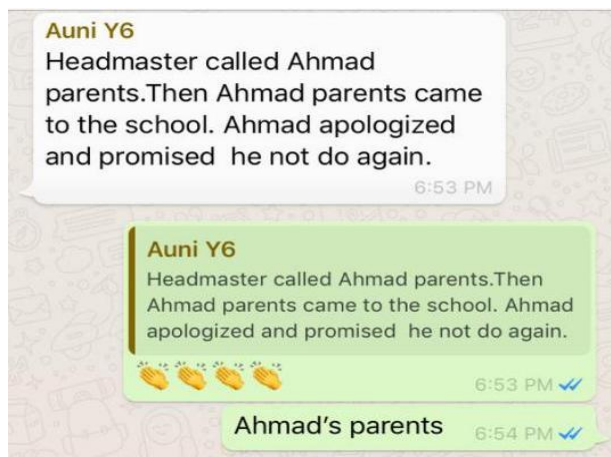
Figure 3: WhatsApp thread

"I feel happy... because I can learn new words when my friends share the meaning in the (WhatsApp) group." (B2)

"Before this, I don't know many words. Now... (I can) learn many new words." (G4)

In addition, the pupils also responded that through the discussion in the WhatsApp group, by reading others' sentences that have been corrected by the teacher-researcher had significantly assisted them to construct their own sentences faster without much delay as they have learned more accurate and relevant words that could be applied in their narrative writing. The pupils also commented that they frequently face hesitation and difficulties in ways to start writing an essay. Luckily, given the opportunity to utilize WhatsApp as a tool for the learning of narrative writing, they felt that they have gained a clear understanding of the correct word and sentence structures that should be used based on the discussion and feedback received in the WhatsApp group.

"I can read my friends' sentences... (so) I can finish the essay faster." (G2)

"(Before this) I don't know what to write and now, I feel (much more) okay." (B4)

"(Before this) I was stuttered to write a sentence, now I get (many) ideas for my writing." (G1)

In relation to the theory of social constructivism, it is applied when the pupils' constructions of knowledge were facilitated through the social interaction in the WhatsApp group. The social interaction in this context refers to the instant feedback provided by the teacher-researcher and other members of the WhatsApp group on the appropriate vocabulary that should be used in the context of their narrative writing. The role of the teacher-researcher as the facilitator in mediating the discussion in the WhatsApp group had successfully created a learning environment in which the pupils exchanged ideas and collaborated in completing the narrative writing tasks. Based on the social interaction occurred in the WhatsApp group, the pupils then constructed their own meaning and understanding on the accurate vocabulary that should be used in the narrative writing which then reflects the cognitive constructivism theory of learning, as the progress shown 75% of the pupils proved that they have developed a significant understanding in constructing their narrative writing. This is in line with the study by Bensalem (2018) as WhatsApp mediation is perceived effective than traditional instruction in enhancing learners' vocabulary learning thus, reflects the constructivist theory since WhatsApp has helped students construct their vocabulary knowledge. Apart of that, the progress displayed by the pupils also reflects the ZPD theory in which the tasks that the pupils could not do by themselves were accomplished through the assistance and feedback received from the teacher-researcher, other members in the WhatsApp group as well as the resources available such as the dictionary app on the appropriate vocabulary that should be used in the narrative writing. When the pupils are able to acquire meaningful understanding on the appropriate words that should be used, the ZPD or the gap between the tasks that the pupils could do unaided and the tasks that the pupils could not do by themselves would eventually shrink, thus the pupils are expected to accomplish the same tasks individually next time.

2. How does WhatsApp affect the grammar of the pupils' narrative writing on the topic of the bully?

Figure 4 shows the result of the pre and post-test for the aspect of grammar. The figure revealed that only G2 which represented 12% of the pupils was able to score two marks higher in the post-test, from 12 to 13 marks. On the other hand, another pupil, B1 was found to show a decrease of marks from 9 to 8 which represented 13% of the participants. For the other six pupils or 75% of them, they neither progressed nor showed any decrease in marks of pre and post-test as B2, B3, B4, G1, G3, and G4 scored 12, 10, 10, 12, 9 and 13 respectively in both pre and post-test.

As 75% of the pupils neither progressed nor showed any decrease in marks of pre and post-test, this finding concluded that the aspect of grammar was not found to have any effect on the use of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing. This finding is contradicted with the findings by Andujar (2016) on the benefits of WhatsApp on the grammatical accuracy of 80 ESL

third-year Spanish students' writing development as the study found major improvements in the number of errors and accuracy in the experimental group.
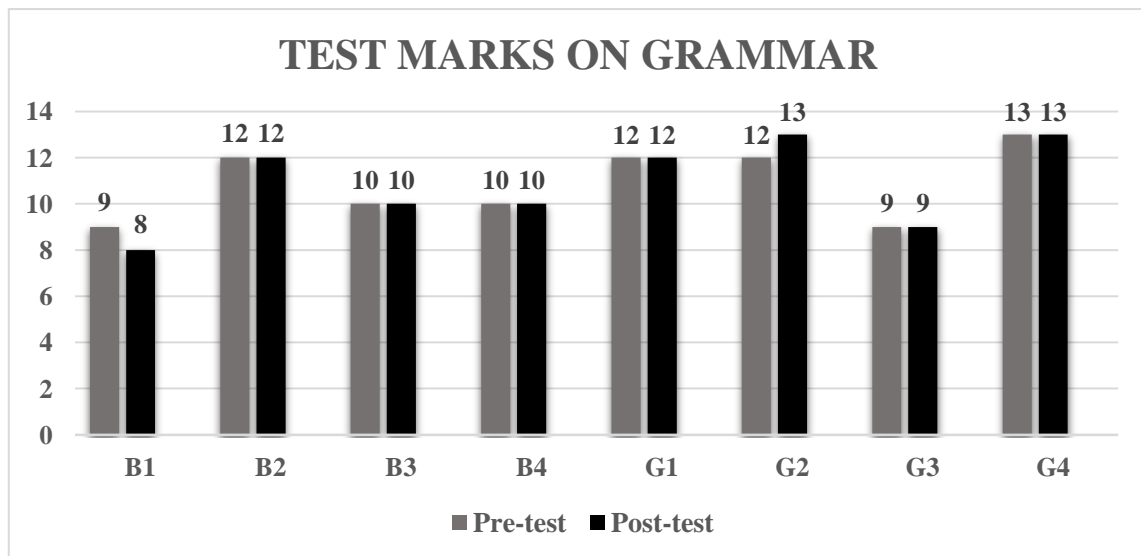

Figure 4: Post-test marks on grammar

Similarly, this finding did not support the study by Ali et al. (2018) on the effect of using WhatsApp in teaching grammar particularly the present and past indefinite tenses to 100 Grade 5 EFL students on the progress of average marks shown by the experimental group in post-test. The main factor that could contribute to this contradiction between these studies and the current study is the duration of the study. For Andujar's study, it was conducted for six months while the duration of Ali et al.'s study took a month with one-hour of WhatsApp engagement each day thus, the duration of both studies was longer than the current study which was conducted in only 2 weeks with approximately 23 hours of engagement. Hence, conducted the study in longer duration could provide sufficient time for the WhatsApp engagement to take place which then could eventually enhance the students' knowledge and understanding of grammatical features. Moreover, the focus of the current study was more inclined towards developing the content of the narrative writing and vocabulary knowledge of the pupils thus; grammar aspect could be in the least attention during the teaching of narrative writing through the use of WhatsApp which explained the insignificant effect of WhatsApp to the narrative writing of the pupils. In addition, the current proficiency level of the pupils could be another factor as stated earlier; the proficiency level of the pupils is at A2 level as according to the CEFR descriptors which refers to elementary English users. Hence, the pupils at this level are yet to grasp the basic form of grammar especially in applying the form correctly in narrative writing.

Based on the DA conducted, there were two prominent grammatical errors made by the pupils; wrong usage of pronoun and incorrect form of the infinitive verb. The following example shows the sentences written by G1, G2 andG3 in the post-test on the wrong usage of the pronoun in the sentences;

G1: *They were forgiven **he**.*

G2: *... pushed Ali until **him** fell down.*

G3: *Sundenly, Ahmad saw a group of boy came to **his**.*

It was observed that the pupils were confused on the correct use of personal pronouns 'he' and 'him' and possessive pronoun 'his' as these pronouns carry similar function; as a noun phrase used by itself which refers to the people in the discourse or to someone or something mentioned elsewhere in the discourse. The wrong usage of the pronoun was probably influenced by the interference of their L1 which is Malay. In the Malay language, there was no gender-specific pronoun in referring to the male or female subject, thus the pupils perceived these pronouns to carry similar meaning which is 'male subject' thus, the similar meaning somehow confused the pupils on the accurate use of pronoun based on the context of the sentence. The wrong usage of the pronoun was also observed in RFN as shown in Figure 5 when one pupil had mistakenly used the personal pronoun 'they' instead of 'them' in referring to the bully and the victim, in which the meaning of both pronouns in Malay is similar thus, cause confusion to the pupil.

The following example shows the sentences written by G1 and G2 in the post-test on the incorrect form of the infinitive verb;

G1: *The discipline teacher want **to punished** the bully.*

G2: *He have **to waited** in the line **to bought** some food such as chicken rice.*

Figure 5: WhatsApp thread

Similar grammatical errors were observed on both sentences written by G1 and G2 on the incorrect form of infinitive verbs '…to punished', '…to waited' and '… to bought'. These participants were aware on the past tense form of the regular verbs 'waited' and 'punished' and the irregular verb 'bought', however, they might not notice that these verbs were preceded by the sign of the infinitive *to*, thus these verbs should be written in their basic form; '…to punish', '… to wait' and '… to buy' respectively.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This small-scale case study attempts to identify the effects of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing to Grade 6 primary school pupils in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar. Based on the DA of pre and post-test marks, it could be concluded that the use of WhatsApp in teaching narrative writing was found to significantly improve the vocabulary learning of the pupils as six pupils or 75% of them showed an increase of one and two marks in their post-test while decreased in marks was observed on the other two of the pupils or 25% of them. The positive response was also observed based on the FGI data as the pupils perceived WhatsApp as a useful tool for vocabulary enhancement and sentence construction through the sharing of the meaning of the new words as well as corrected sentences in the WhatsApp group based on the feedback received from the teacher-researcher and members of the group. Therefore, this finding could fill in the literature gap on pedagogical aspect in implementing WhatsApp as a technological in improving vocabulary learning. As discussed by Bakhtiyar (2017), the ability of WhatsApp to connect a teacher and a group of students everywhere and every time opens endless possibilities for them to learn English language skills autonomously including vocabulary in a non-threatening environment.On the other hand, the aspect of grammar was not found to have any effect by the use of WhatsApp in the teaching of narrative writing as only one pupil who represented 12% of the sample showed slight improvement in the post-test marks, from 12 to 13 marks while another pupil showed a decrease of marks from 9 to 8 which represented 13% of the pupils. For the other six pupils or 75% of them, they neither progressed nor showed any decrease in marks of pre and post-test in the aspect of grammar. Therefore, this study proved that WhatsApp could enhance the vocabulary of the pupils' narrative writing while more time is needed for the grammar aspect to improve as the pupils are still primary school learners and they are yet to grasp the basic form of grammar.

Thus, it is hoped the findings of the study could increase the pupils' engagement in learning English writing as the integration of mobile messaging app, WhatsApp could suit their 21st-century learning needs. The engagement in learning could occur when WhatsApp allows the pupils to manipulate its functions in connecting and interacting with the members in the WhatsApp group through the sharing and discussion on the meaning of words from the e-dictionary apps, images on bully downloaded from the internet as well as constructing sentences based from the teacher researcher's and group members' feedback. Moreover, the approach used in this study could also raise awareness to the pupils on the process of writing which basically involve four steps; brainstorming, drafting, revising and editing. Through the use of WhatsApp, the revising and editing parts would be much easier and time-saving as WhatsApp allows them to delete any misspelled words rather than rubbing off the errors when writing the conventional way using pencil. For the educators, the findings of this study could shed some lights on how the educators could manipulate the functions of mobile messaging apps in teaching English particularly the skill of writing. The educators could also explore the latest features of the messaging apps particularly WhatsApp such as the audio recording, WhatsApp status, and stickers and how these features could be integrated into the teaching of English language skills.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE WORK

This study focuses specifically on the teaching of narrative writing through the use of WhatsApp to eight Grade 6 pupils from one primary school in Negeri Sembilan thus, the findings of the study could not be generalized in the larger context. Due to this limitation, this study might not reflect other classroom situations that employ WhatsApp in their learning and assessments particularly in the teaching of writing.In future studies, it is recommended that future study could be replicated and extended to another setting of primary schools as well as secondary school students. A bigger sample of participants consisting of various races which include Chinese and Indians pupils could also be involved in order to seek diversity in

findings. In addition, the period of intervention of this study was only 2 weeks with an approximate 23-hour of engagement thus, future study could be conducted for a longer duration in order to increase the validity and reliability of the findings. Apart from that, this study only tested on one language skill which is writing, focusing specifically on narrative writing through the use of one mobile messaging app, WhatsApp. Hence, the researcher recommends that future study should explore the use of WhatsApp in the teaching of speaking and reading skills as well as other components of writing. Moreover, this study could also be replicated by utilizing other social media apps such as Twitter, Instagram and Telegram thus, diversity in findings could be observed in terms of distinct functionalities and features of each app in supporting the learning activities in an m-learning environment.

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