E-Writing: The Effectiveness of Using Writing Application in Distance Learning

Abstract

The primary aim of this study was to explore the effectiveness of teaching writing skill using E-Writing application in distance learning from the viewpoints of higher education students of Islamic State University of Semarang. Mix method were used as the research design. The quantitative data were obtained through one group pretest posttest design to know the effectiveness of the application to student’s writing achievement. Then, a questionnaire was used to investigate student’s attitude toward the writing application. The results of the writing test showed that student’s writing was improved. The average score of student’s pre-test score was increased for about 27 points, from 59 points to 86 points on post-test. The analysis of student's questionnaire demonstrated conceptions about using technology of doing independent learning especially in English learning. The study showed that students admit the effectiveness of technology in distance learning and they believe that having learning independency will help them to adapt in any situations.

Keywords: distance learning; writing; e-writing
A. Introduction

There are two main language competencies in language learning namely, productive and receptive language competencies. Ability to speak and write or producing language output categorized as productive competencies, while ability to receive information or input categorized as receptive competencies. However, writing skill is one of the language skills that plays an important role in teaching and learning English. Mastering writing skills helps someone to communicate or convey ideas in written form. It is not arguable that spoken language is an important element in language. However, without correct writing production, the written communication will be impossible to be conducted in proper way. People could understand grammar mistakes in speaking, and the conversation will still go on, but not when we produce incorrect writing. The communication could go wrong and almost impossible to be understood smoothly.

The main purpose of conducting teaching and learning process in any language is about helping students to communicate with target language users. But in reality, from preliminary research that has been done, it was found that learning writing in this distance learning situation is quite difficult. Teacher/lecturer has their limitation to guide each student to write good and properly. Students found experiencing difficulties in writing English, which includes poor organization, unstructured content, incorrect grammar, word choice, and mechanics; such as incorrect spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Of course, with these shortcomings fatal in the quality of their writing.

As is known, writing skills are a means of written communication which has been claimed to be the most difficult of the four language skills. Harmer (2004) stated that writing process takes a long and complicated time, and its completion requires language components which include good vocabulary and grammar through adequate reading and listening skills. A good writing process must go through several procedures, namely planning, compiling, and editing, even re-planning, compiling rework, and re-edit before they produce the final version of the written product. Based on the pre-research survey on August 2021, students did not carry out the writing procedure and preferred the instant route by directly writing according to what came to their mind, resulting in poor writing.

In addition to the above factors, students are also faced the problem of time constraints. The writing process takes time to organize ideas, compose writings and then, review them and edit them in various ways especially if needed, changing ideas, rearranging, re-editing, and so on, and the whole process certainly can’t be done perfectly in class, especially in this pandemic situation.

In order to overcome these difficulties, the writer offers solutions that can be applied so that the learning process in writing skills can be carried out properly. In addition to paying attention to the material, strategies and learning environment, of course the thing that can be pursued is to use learning media. It must be admitted that the development of learning media for learning writing skills is still very limited in number. The media commonly used are usually only in the form of a series of pictures or videos which are only in the form of providing a stimulus to stimulate the reasoning process and the development of writing ideas. So that the presence of effective and efficient learning media is increasingly needed.

This research focus on the effectiveness of an application to compose writings. E-writing is a writing learning media developed to support student’s independent learning. This application completed with some features includes writing guidance and suggestions, pair correction and similarity checker. This study aims to check the effectiveness of the implementation of E-Writing for teaching writing in UIN Walisongo Semarang. The data were analyzed to answer the research problem that is How effective is E-writing implementation for teaching writing in UIN Walisongo?

B. Literature Review

Vreken (1998) stated that learning media can be interpreted as various types of media used to introduce or explain learning content to students, so that learning carried out by students can run effectively. Jacobs, et al (2002) also define that learning media can as objects used by teachers, or given to students to achieve certain teaching and learning outcomes. Therefore, learning media can be defined as any media used by the teacher to present lessons effectively.

According to Coger (1975), learning media can be classified as follows: 1) Real media, namely real things, such as live animals, preserved flora and animals, 2) tourism media such as educational tours and visits to zoos, planetariums, 3) audio-visual media, such as television, videos. 4) visual media, such as maps, pictures, transparencies and diagrams, 5) audio media,
such as radios, cassette players, and cd-players, and 6) computer-based media, such as educational programs on computers and information on the Internet.

Especially for computer and phone-based media, such as educational programs on computers and handphone is very important to keep students up-to-date and easy with educational programs available for computers. Ehsan, et al (2020) stated that the use of technologies has opened up new doors, changing innovatively the way teachers teach and students learn. Learning with this type of media is known as e-learning where learning can be done using interactive programs on computer and mobile phone networks.

The presence and availability of learning media is expected to help teachers and students to solve learning barriers. According to Rahardjito (2008), the media has at least four functions in the learning process, namely: 1) the media can attract the interest of the learner so that the learner's attention can be fully devoted to the learning process which of course can stimulate learning motivation, 2) the media can make the subject matter clearer and more meaningful so that it is easy to learn. understood by learners and allows them to master the expected competencies better, 3) the media is able to make learning methods more diverse, not only limited to one-way verbal communication so that learners do not feel bored and teachers do not run out of energy, 4) media can make learners act more learning activities because they not only listen to the teacher's explanations but also have other activities such as observing, demonstrating, and so on.

Reiser (1983) also defined the purpose of using learning media. Learning media is seen as helping to simplify the process of learning a language and perfecting it, reducing the use of the first language, generating students' learning motivation and interest, explaining new concepts without difficulties and misunderstandings, equating perceptions; and improve the quality and results of language learning so that the learning process is more interesting and interactive.

There are several things that a teacher must pay attention to so that the media used can provide the desired learning outcomes. Bates (2012) states that there are 8 criteria for learning media. A good learning media supposed to: 1) meet to student needs, 2) easy to use, 3) easy to reach, 4) works well, 5) creates interaction, 6) is organized, 7) can connect related parties, 8) is safe to use. Meanwhile, according to Educational Development and Technology13 a good media must meet the following criteria: 1) have a good compositional structure, 2) be easy to use by teachers and learners, 3) can assist the learning process in explaining concepts and features, and 4) can help achieve learning goals.

Understanding the difficulties faced by students, of course a good teacher will make improvements to the whole concept of teaching and learning, including thinking about what media can be used in the learning process. E Shelley (2009) stated that selection of good learning media will help students overcome their difficulties in the process of their writing activities in the classroom.

Effective certainly refers to how the learning media is able to accommodate all the problems that students usually encounter in the classroom, such as text structure and organization, idea development, vocabulary, grammar and even revision and publication. Efficient of course refers to that the learning media must be able to be used by taking into account all the limitations of both time and facilities.

Suhartono and Laraswati (2016) in their research have developed a visual learning media that is used to teach writing skills to junior high school students. This qualitative research focuses on student responses that have been proven positive after the application of this visual learning media. This study found that visual learning media can help students to be more creative in developing their writing ideas. Another research that focuses on improving students' writing skills is a study conducted by Wening (2016) with a research focus on the use of picture series to teach writing skills. This study found that picture series was able to help students' writing skills, especially in the context of thinking sequentially or chronologically. Another research is development research by Alyani (2016) which aims to develop text-based teaching materials to improve students' writing skills. This research found that students want comprehensive writing skills learning that can help them in the overall writing process both in terms of structure and content.

Those researches have similarities with this research as the focus of how to improve teaching and learning of writing. However, this research has its distinction since it is focus on the implementation of learning writing application which is easy to use by students independently. This is a special application because it could navigate student's writing, it has guidance-learning stages features, similarity checker and pair correction connected to email.
E-writing is a writing learning media developed to support student’s independent learning. This application completed with some features includes writing guidance and suggestions, pair correction and similarity checker. 

The steps to use this application is first, choosing the role. The application provides two roles; as teacher or students. After choosing our role, the students can start to choose what text are they going to write. Next, the application provides a suggestion to watch a video if the students need a help about certain unfamiliar topic or idea, but they can directly continue writing and skip the video watching. In writing step, the student will be guided by the application by given information of what they need to so for each part of the text. Finish with the text, students can continue to check their authenticity level of writing. Finally, the writing can be submitted and it will be evaluated through pair correction. The pair correction feature provides students chances to identify other’s mistake and followed by offering suggestion.

**C. Methodology**

The mix method was applied in this research to know the effectiveness of the implementation of e-writing application. Based on Sugiyono (2011: 18), mix methods are research methods by combining two research methods at once, qualitative and quantitative in a research activity, so that more comprehensive, valid, reliable, and objective data will be obtained. The mix method in this study started by obtaining data from students’ achievement and continued with the following phase, that is obtaining students perception and attitude toward the implementation of the application into teaching and learning process.

Quantitative data as the main data was obtained by doing one group pretest posttest to know the effectiveness of the application to improve student’s writing. Qualitative data as supported data was obtained through questionnaire to gather students or user perceptions and attitudes about this application. Data were analyzed through descriptive analysis. Twenty-five students participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used as the technique for data sampling. It consists of ten male students and fifteen female students. To obtain the quantitative data, a writing test was conducted. The test aimed to check the accuracy of students writing. A writing instrument test was used to conduct the test. The test showed the level of effectiveness of the use of writing application. For qualitative data, a questionnaire was prepared by the researcher. The questionnaire was composed of twelve questions, with two options, namely, ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’. The questionnaire items were prepared and developed based on some previous and relevant literatures. The number of reliability coefficient for the instrument was .075, which
categorized as moderate reliability, so then it can be concluded that the instrument is reliable enough to use in this research.

D. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

Tests were carried out using the one group pretest-posttest design method to determine the impact of e-writing application on respondents. Based on table 1, testing was carried out 2 times, before (P1) using the application and after using the application (P2). Based on the result of the tests, it can be seen that the increase occurred before and after using the e-writing application.
Table 1. Students tests result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>P1 % (Pretest)</th>
<th>P2 % (Posttest)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>76,00</td>
<td>88,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>64,00</td>
<td>88,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>48,00</td>
<td>84,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>52,00</td>
<td>84,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results of the tests that have been carried out in table 2, it can be seen that student’s content is improved. In the first statement there is an increase in the percentage from 76,00 % to 88,00 %, in the second statement there is an increase from 64,00 % to 88 % for students writing organization, in the third statement there is an increase from 48,00 % to 88 % for clarity of writing, then in the fourth statement there is an increase from 52,00 % to 84,00 % for students’ grammar.

The result of students’ perspective and attitude about the e-writing application is presented on the table below

Table 2. Students’ beliefs on the value of using spell checker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I believe that the application has pedagogical value</td>
<td>88,00</td>
<td>12,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I believe that this application can improve my writing</td>
<td>96,00</td>
<td>4,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I believe that this application gives opportunities to improve the quality of my writing</td>
<td>96,00</td>
<td>4,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I think that students need to use this application to increase their writing’s clarity and accuracy</td>
<td>96,00</td>
<td>4,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the result of first question, it can be seen that most of students believe that the application has pedagogical value for them. The value here means how the application can help students to develop their skill of writing. The second statement related to student’s beliefs of the application which able to improve my writing also shows a good result. The results of question three indicates that all of the participants are agree that the application provide learners with opportunity to promote the improvement in their quality of writing. Question four asked participants whether e-writing application should be used by other students or not. It reveals that almost all of the participants, 96,00 %, agree with the idea that the e-writing application should be used for English learners to help them improving their clarity and accuracy in writing. In short, Table 2 reveals that although some students do not think that the e-writing application has any value, majority of students think that the application has pedagogical value, especially to improve student’s writing skill.

Table 3 students’ attitude toward the application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I believe that I cannot improve my writing by this application</td>
<td>28,00</td>
<td>72,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I believe that this application cannot support independent learning</td>
<td>12,00</td>
<td>88,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I believe that this application can be time consuming</td>
<td>12,00</td>
<td>88,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I find it difficult to use this application</td>
<td>24,00</td>
<td>76,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that most of students do not agree with the statement that the e-writing application cannot improve student’s writing skill. In other statement, eighty percent of students stated that this application can support their independent learning, because this application substitute teacher’s role to guide students in writing. Ninety percent of students also
disagree with the idea that This application is needs much time allotment. Question eight indicates that most of students do not find difficulties to operate or use e-writing application. Generally, students showed to have a good attitude to this application.

Table 4 proofs that most of students are considering the fact that e-writing application is an effective media to improve student’s writing.

Table 4 e-writing effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I believe that this application can decrease my anxiety toward writing learning</td>
<td>36,00</td>
<td>64,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I believe that this application is not too effective for writing learning</td>
<td>12,00</td>
<td>88,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I believe that this application promotes writing accuracy and clarity</td>
<td>8,00</td>
<td>92,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I believe that this application promotes independent learning</td>
<td>12,00</td>
<td>88,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question nine was asked to students to reveal how they feel about the e-writing could improve their confidence in writing. The results indicate that many students feel that this application lower their anxiety in writing. Question ten indicates that majority of students stated that the e-writing is an effective application for their writing learning.

2. Discussion

English language teaching and technology cannot be separated. There is a rapid development and implementation of technology to promote an effective language teaching. The results of this research support others previous research about the implementation of technology in English language teaching. In line with Suhartono & Laraswati (2016), this study found that learning media can strongly improve student’s motivation and quality of learning. Learning media, especially in visual and interactive mode can increase students understanding, other than being given by something abstract and unseen. This research also supports a study by Wening (2016) which found that picture series was able to help students’ writing skills, especially in the context of thinking sequentially or chronologically. In this research, the step-by-step guidance existed in the e-writing application helped students to think chronologically and to write in good organization. Finally, a proper and good writing as the aim of the implementation of this learning media also support the study done by Alyani (2016). Both studies proved that the use of media help students to have a comprehensive writing skill. By the helps of learning media, students able to improve their writing includes all its components namely content, organization, words and sentence clarity and also grammar. All the components which works together will produce a good writing production.

Technology and education are both dynamic. As we can see, technology of education movement in such way. We found that a computer integration in educational technology can support teaching and learning process, especially in this pandemic situation while face to face learning cannot be done. Learning through technology now became a trend. Parents, teachers and students often to install any application which can support their learning process. This action is based on the beliefs that those application has a pedagogical value for them. They feel an improvement, knowledge elevation and increase in some life aspects. A research from Zhang (2016) showed that a teacher and students’ attitude in choosing application for learning will help them to maximize the advantages of the applications itself. The wiser they use, the greater benefits taken. Another research from Jati (2018) also stated that some useful application can be used for self-study and they are really helpful to improve students English learning. The e-writing application in this research is an application which integrated with browser and similarity checker. Basically, this application is easy to use because it guides students step to step, from idea searching into similarity checker and continued by pair checking.

This research proves that an education is about improvement. Development and implementation of this application is about integrating pedagogical value and technology to promote students independent learning. Self-learning or independent learning does not mean students can stand alone without teacher guidance. Independency here is the way students could access knowledge freely, validate it and confirm it even their teacher in distance.
Independent learning is needed in this pandemic situation. While teaching and learning cannot be conducted at class, students still able to improve themselves pedagogically. As Jati (2018) stated that teachers who eager to dig more information about learning application and technology, and they desire to learn and to use it in real teaching practices will find many potentials of how technology could really help us in teaching and learning process. So, distance and an absence of physical teachers would not become a problem when students able to explore a suitable technology for learning.

Finally, the result of this research shows that this E-Writing application is effective to improve student’s pronunciation accuracy. This spell checker also promotes independent learning that students could access it easily and take an advantage from it, and apply the pedagogical value in wider context and area.

E. Conclusion
The primary aim of this study was to explore the effectiveness of using e-writing from the viewpoints of EFL students. The result of one group pretest-posttest showed that there was an increase in students writing quality. Students had significant improvement on their writing after using the application. Based on the tests that have been carried out, it can be concluded that the e-writing has an impact on increasing student’s writing skill. Related to student’s perceptions and attitudes about this application, most of students agree that this e-writing is effective to promote students independent learning on English writing. However, based on further statement, students stated that even there is a good lecturer, good application helping them to learn produce good writings. Since this research limits its analysis of based on students perspective only, future research can analyze the effectiveness of the application based on teacher's perspective.

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