

## FOSTERING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS BY THE INTEGRATION OF MALL APPLICATION

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### Abstract

Writing has been one of the most significant skills to acquire by high school students. In fact, students still find it difficult due to weak mastery of writing components and limited practice as well as exposure and facility. On these grounds, utilizing MALL in a hybrid learning setting is assumed to enhance their writing skill. The present study employed a qualitative approach with a classroom action research design conducted in 3 cycles. 20 high school students were involved as the subject in this study. The data were obtained using observation, test, and interview. The findings suggested that online writing applications can help promote students' writing skills demonstrated by the score increase from Cycle 1 to 3 and their participation. The students either perceived the MALL application positively. It is recommended that the MALL application is integrated into writing class with more modeling genre to build students' vast knowledge. Providing more comprehensive feedback for students' work is either worthy of notice.

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential skill to master by language learners for a number of functions. Borrowing Urbanova and Oakland's idea, Klimova (2013) lists that writing has a key social and educational role. Walsh (2010) adds that writing also plays a pivotal function in a career for professional communication. In the Indonesian curriculum context, writing skills place a critical position as students must write for communicating with others (Kemendikbud, 2015).

Many students find that writing is a challenging skill to acquire. From the pre-observation conducted by the researchers at one of the private senior high schools in Bogor Regency, it was discovered that students did not frequently write as they are lack of writing element mastery. Additionally, the learning time allocated by the school is considered limited. Another fact is that exposure to the facility to develop students' writing skills is still far from being sufficient. These problems are also listed by Toba et al. (2019) as the main obstacles that most Indonesians face in their writing class.

MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) as a part of e-learning has been on-trend in the current pedagogy. Dudeney & Hockly (2007) acknowledge the term as m-learning. They claim that this model works smoothly in this digital era due to life style and the demand for fast and effective learning solutions. Further, Miangah & Nezarat (2012) see MALL as an ideal solution for learners to study a language. From the students' side, MALL can be an encouraging model to learn and offer a variety of activities (Hashim et al., 2017).

In respect of writing, many researchers have investigated how this MALL contributes to students' writing development. A significant impact of MALL on students' writing performance was detected (Estarki & Bazyar, 2016). Likewise, Malekzadeh & Najmi (2015)

found out that students who learn a language using mobile devices show much better results on writing tests than those who utilize paper and pen. Al-hamad et al. (2019) confirmed the positive effect of MALL on students' mastery of generating and developing ideas, vocabulary, structure, and punctuation. Besides a positive effect on students' writing competency, Dewi et al. (2020) found out that MALL also improves students' motivation to write.

The above-listed studies have proven how MALL influence students' writing skill. Nevertheless, they did not comprehensively concern about students' participation during the use of MALL and the students' perception of MALL integration into their classroom. On that ground, the present study aims to integrate MALL to promote students' writing skills, seek their participation during a learning session, or investigate how they perceive MALL in their classroom.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The present study adapted action research model suggested by Kemmis et al. (2014). The model was chosen as it portrays practicality aspect of classroom learnings. To be more detail, this research enables teachers to act what they want to enhance their students' learning.

The research was conducted in 3 cycles. Each Cycle was implemented in four phases: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. In planning stage, the researchers generally designed the scenarios for learning based on the syllabus provided by the school. In this phase, the researchers sharpened what objectives to achieve by the students, determined what activities to do during the learning sessions, and created posttest to evaluate learning. In acting and observing stage, one of the researchers enacted out the lesson plan designed in advance. She was assisted by a collaborator to make sure that learning activities were well monitored. The results of acting and observing stage would be mirrored in reflecting stage as a basis for planning the next cycle learning.

As the present study adapted hybrid learning, each Cycle was delivered in two modes: face-to-face and online sessions. The practice of writing was delivered in WPA (Writing Process Approach) proposed by Brown (2001) and implemented in four phases: prewriting, drafting, revising, and publishing.

### **Subject**

The subjects involved in this research were one class of 11<sup>th</sup> grade at a private senior high school in Bogor consisting of 20 students. The students are basically technology enthusiasts. They are also eager to learn writing in English. However, their writing performance is considered insufficient due to the restriction of writing element mastery, practice time, exposure, and facilities.

### **Instruments**

To collect the data, the researchers used three instruments: observation, test and interview. Observation was applied during all 3 cycles to see the students' learning process and their participation. Pre-observation was initiated to check students' initial writing skill. Test was administered in form of posttest at the end of each Cycle. It was aimed at checking the students' writing performance after being taught using MALL. Interview was done once the learning cycles finished. The purpose was to find out how the students responded to the use of MALL application in their writing class. The students were interviewed in groups to represent low, middle, and high achievers.

### **Data Analysis**

The obtained data were then analyzed using data analysis procedure suggested by Miles et al (2014) which consisted of data reduction, data description, and data verification. In data

reduction, the researchers sorted the completeness of all data collected from observation, test and interview. In the next step, data were classified based on the present study foci. In data verification, the researchers interpreted the findings and compared the result to the existing theory and previous relevant studies. The validity of data was confirmed using triangulation as suggested by Cresswell (2012).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

#### Pre-Action Observation

Pre-action observation was firstly made by the researchers to identify what problems that the students encountered in their writing class. It was found out that they were lack of exercise due to limited time allocated by the school. By way of addition, they need more facilities and exposure to develop their writing skill.

#### Action Description

##### Cycle I

##### *Planning*

Before Cycle I started, the researchers prepared a lesson plan based on the syllabus provided by the school. The material to be taught was interpersonal text focusing on cause and effect which was delivered in face-to-face mode, while the writing exercise was done in offline and online session. The first posttest was either administered in MALL application. The text given to students talked about bullying.

##### *Acting*

The researcher began the class by informing the students the material to learn and what MALL application to use. Having delivered apperception, the researcher asked the students to take their mobile phones to download MALL application and created their own account on the application. Then, the researcher delivered learning material. Afterwards, the students were asked to start creating their own text. The students drafted their text in in offline class. In online session, the students post their text on story title and story description menu, then they published it in publish menu. Then, the researcher gave feedback on comment column. After revision, the students then re-published their text on publish menu.

##### *Observing*

During the process of observation on two modes of learning, the researcher, with the help from the collaborator, collected the data using on-off task observation. This type of observation was used as it offers easiness for the researcher and collaborator to check the students' participation comprehensively. During the hybrid sessions, it was observed that only 65% students participated actively, while the rest tent to be silent although they paid attention. The percentage of students' participation is presented in Figure 1.

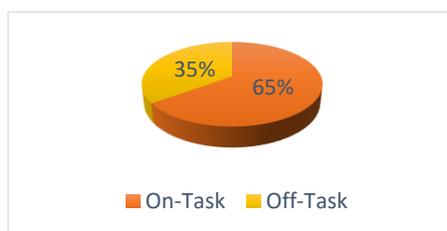


Figure 1. On-Off Task Observation in Cycle 1

After uploading the task, the students were then given posttest. The result indicated that 11 students (55%) could pass the passing grade, while 9 students (45%) could not. The percentage is displayed below.

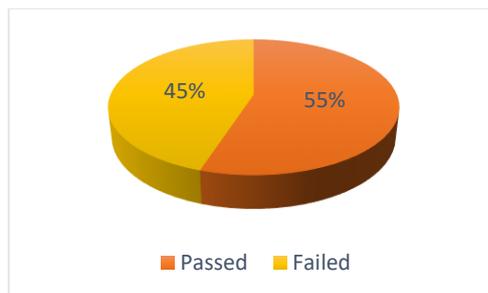


Figure 2. Posttest Result in Cycle I

### *Reflecting*

Based on the result of their assignment and posttest, the researcher found out that the students were still lack of arranging and developing ideas to create cohesive and coherent descriptive text. It was concluded that the students' writing still needed improvement.

### Cycle II

#### *Planning*

Based on the reflection of Cycle I, cycle II lesson would be focusing on developing ideas to create cohesive and coherent text. Still using the same the same material "cause and effect", the topic given to students was about "harassment". The learning steps was designed similar to Cycle I, delivered in face-to-face and online session.

#### *Acting*

The researcher began the class by apperception and review of the last session learning material and activity. After the material was delivered, a short discussion about the topic was guided by the researcher. Next, the students then open their MALL application to start drafting their text. Similar to steps in Cycle I, editing, revising and publishing process were done online. Having posted their work on publish menu, feedback was given on comment menu by the researcher. Afterwards, the text was re-published and posttest was administered.

#### *Observing*

From the on-off task observation data, it was revealed that 95% students showed their engagement, while the rest (35%) were not. The participation percentage is visualized in Figure 3.



Figure 3. On-Off Task Observation in Cycle II

From the posttest, it was identified that the writing score increased compared to the result of Cycle I posttest. The result signified that 16 students (80%) passed the test, while the rest (20%) still could not reach the minimum score. The score comparison is exhibited in Figure 4.

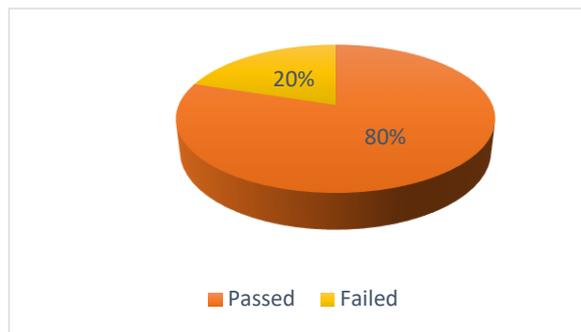


Figure 4. Posttest Result in Cycle II

*Reflecting*

The students' writing skill and participation score in Cycle II showed significant improvement compared to the Cycle I's result. However, a number of students still should be assisted to pass the passing grade and promote their participation. On that ground, the researcher continued the learning to Cycle III.

Cycle III

*Planning*

In the last Cycle, the researchers used song lyrics as the material focusing on teenagers or friendship. The students were planned to analyze the song lyric as well as to interpret it.

*Acting*

The last Cycle of learning activity was organized a bit differently. The researcher asked the students to make a group and searched the song lyric they liked. The researcher also asked them some questions related to the song such as the singer feeling when he/she sang the song and the meaning of the deepest lyric that made the song meaningful. They also had to interpret the song lyrics based on the reason why the composer composed the song. The interpretation was then presented in writing. Similar to Cycle I and II, drafting was finished in offline class, while revising and publishing was applied in MALL. This step was completed by the last posttest.

*Observing*

The data gained from on-off task observation pointed out that 100% were actively engaged and participated during all classroom activities, both offline and online. The students' participation is presented in Figure 5.

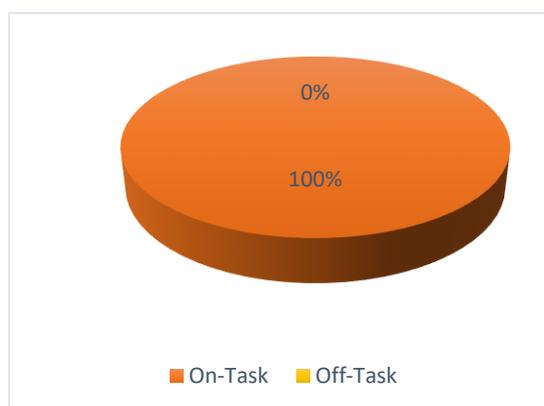


Figure 5. On-Off Task Observation in Cycle III

The writing test result either showed 100% success that all students could pass the minimum criteria. Figure 6 displays the test result percentage.

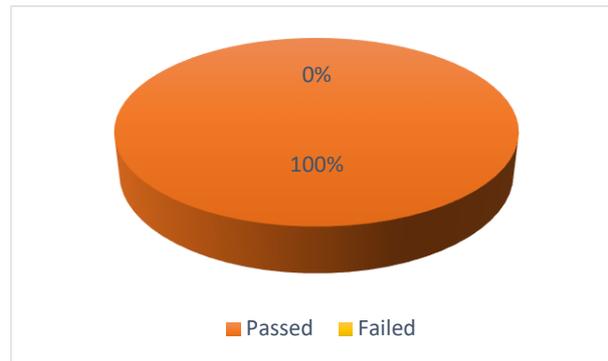


Figure 6. Posttest Result in Cycle III

### *Reflecting*

The score of posttest and participation in Cycle III exhibits a satisfactory increase. These results reflected that all students have successfully made betterment on their writing performance and active participation in face-to-face class and online class.

### *Interview Result*

Having finished the learning and test in each Cycle, a group interview was administered. The result revealed that the students showed enthusiasm on the use of MALL in their writing class. The detail is presented below.

#### *Practicality*

All group representatives admitted that the MALL application used in their class have helped them with paperless learning. They claimed that this kind of learning is practical for them.

#### *Flexibility*

The students interviewed mentioned that learning with MALL application allows them to learn anytime and anywhere. They just needed to open their phone and worked with the mobile application to finish their task whether at school or home.

#### *Novelty*

As a youth, the students view that MALL matches their learning style. They also claim that learning with MALL is considered bringing a new thing to their classroom learning activity.

#### *Security*

All interviewees are keen on using MALL to write as they see that the application has the ability to save and secure their text.

### **Discussion**

The finding from the test precisely reveals that MALL application can promote students' writing skills. The students' writing score increased from Cycle I to Cycle III. This further means that all students' writing mastery of writing elements has developed and enhanced. The score increase is presented in Figure 7.

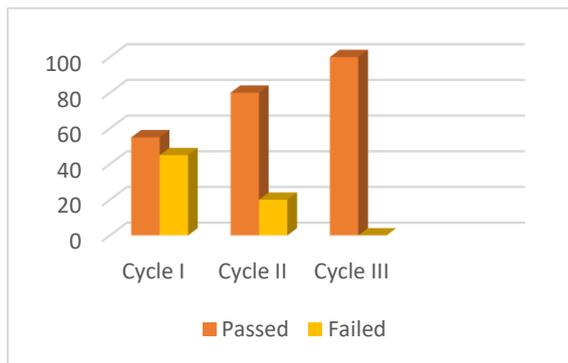


Figure 7. Summary of Test Result from Cycle I-III

The finding of the present study is in harmony with a number of research findings. Al-Hamad et al. (2019) found out that MALL could improve students writing ability as MALL application assists students with consequential enhancement in organizing ideas, mechanic, diction and structure. The study conducted by Al-Wasy & Mahdi (2016) noticed similar result, that MALL facilitated learners writing elements fixation specifically with punctuation and grammar correction. The present study findings also support the analysis of MALL presented by Çakmak (2019), amplifying that language classroom has been enlightened by device eventuality these days.

The result of observation demonstrates that students' participation is also promoted once MALL is used in writing class. The score from Cycle I to III is reported increasing. The increase is observed to be significant. The score is visualized in Figure 8.

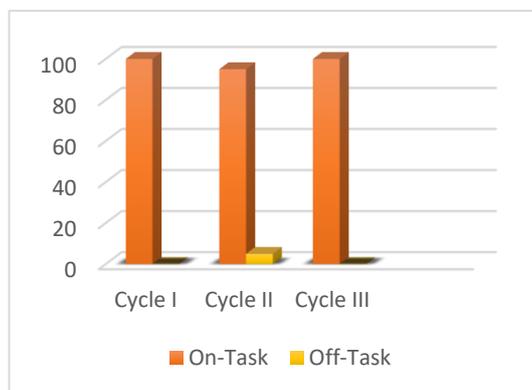


Figure 8. Summary of On-Off Task Observation from Cycle I-III

The present research finding is in assent with the existing theory and previous research result. As a part of e-learning, MALL theoretically is promising for learning participation (Clark & Mayer, 2011; Rank et al., 2011). Further talk in e-learning, Wilson & Smilanich (2005) argued that technology in learning may improve responsiveness. Recently, it was also found out that the use of mobile application in class improve students' engagement or participation (Rajabalee et al., 2020).

Confirming the significant result of test and observation, the interview result denotes the students' positive responses to the use of the MALL application in their class. Such responses was also detected in the research of Gharehblagh & Nasri (2020). Previously, Yudhiantara &

Nasir (2017) acknowledged students' positive perception and attitude after using mobile phone applications in supporting their language classroom activity.

To be more detailed, the students specify their responses to the use of MALL. First, they see practicality when learning with MALL. Soleimani et al. (2014) also highlights that MALL offers practicality and easiness to assist students with learning enhancement. Second, the students agree that learning to write with the MALL application allows them to study everywhere and every time. Such flexibility has also been surveyed by Nurmayawati (2019). Third, the students mention that MALL brings technology newness to their classroom which fits their learning style as they live in the modern era. This is not surprising as Bates (2005) claims novelty as auspicious matters of technology development. Fourth, the students agree that using the MALL application is a secure way to save their writing text. This corresponds to what Costinela-Luminita (2011) has underlined, that security is one of the pivotal issues in e-learning technology. As proposed by Wagner et al. (2016), using mobile phone applications in the classroom brings substitute quality and new-fashioned learning.

## CONCLUSION

The present study aims to utilize the MALL application to advance students' writing skill and participation and find out the students' responses to the use of the MALL application in writing class. The findings and analysis signify that MALL integration into writing class has helped students improve writing skill improvement. The score increase of the writing test from Cycle I to III signals the improvement. In Cycle, I, only 55% of students can achieve the passing grade. In Cycle II, 80% of students are able to attain a passing grade. In the last Cycle, 100% of students successfully reach the passing grade. Besides, the advancement of students' participation is also detected. In Cycle I, only 65% of students show active participation. The participation rate improves to be 95% in Cycle II. And in Cycle III, all students (100%) actively participate in hybrid learning sessions. Additionally, the students perceive the use of the MALL application positively. The positive opinions are due to MALL application practicality, flexibility, novelty, and text security. To that end, it is recommended to apply MALL application in language learning classrooms due to its enhancement on students' performance, participation, and responses.

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