Research on Small Group Writing Activities Compared to Individual Flipped Model Through WhatsApp:
Writing Skill

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates EFL learners' cohesion with small group writing activities compared to individual flipped instruction model through WhatsApp with individual writing activities. A quasi-experimental study with a non-equivalent control group and a pre-test/post-test design was implemented to find any significant difference between the two combinations. The instrument of this study was a writing test. The findings revealed that the small group flipped classroom instruction model through WhatsApp with small group writing activities performed better than teaching cohesion with individual flipped instruction through WhatsApp with individual writing activities. Flipped classroom innovation has attracted English language teaching researchers' attention to scrutinize its effectiveness.

KEYWORDS

Cohesion, Flipped Instruction, Learners, WhatsApp, Writing

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the existence of flipped classrooms has attracted numerous EFL and ESL researchers to investigate many aspects of English skills and elements such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (Ahmed, 2016; Jehma, 2016; Suranakkharin, 2017; Unruh, Peters, & Willis, 2016). Flipped classroom in EFL teaching context is defined as EFL teaching and learning activity using electronic media during out of class as well as in-class teaching and learning activities (Herreid & Schiller, 2013).During out of class activities, learners watch and listen to the video and learn essential notes from it. During out of class activities, they deal with task and problem solving autonomously through individual and group work learning model (Afrilyasanti et.al., 2016). Meanwhile, during classroom teaching and learning, learners are involved interactive classroom discussion (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Schmidt & Ralph, 2016). Regarding the merits of flipped classrooms as reported by Suranakkharin (2017), its practicality and efficiency can empower learners to grow up and develop their English mastery if it is compared to the traditional classroom model.

In Indonesian context, interest in a flipped classroom has also mushroomed among researchers (Afrilyasanti et al., 2016; Santosa, 2017; Zainuddin, 2017). Most of the aforementioned researchers have focused on learners' perception of the flipped classroom as well as English skills such as speaking and writing in EFL settings. Although the use of a mobile application such as WhatsApp has been reported, but the problematic and subjective aspect of cohesion under the umbrella of writing has not

been researched in Indonesian EFL setting. By cohesion, Struthers, Lapadat, & MacMillan (2013), has developed a cohesion checklist to minimize the subjectivity of assessing cohesion so far but it has not been developed a cohesion checklist to minimize the subjectivity of assessing cohesion so far, but it has not been examined yet for cohesion in EFL setting. Further, Mortensen et. al. (2009)defines cohesive device as lexical and grammatical structures that maintain the formulation of coherent paragraph writing.Establishing cohesive writing for EFL learners is very challenging because its subjectivity reason and it is also claimed as a dilemmatic area for Indonesian learners in producing good writing. Thus, the present study sets out to investigate whether small group flipped model viaWhatsApp with small group writing activities can improve EFL learners' cohesion than the individual flipped model via WhatsApp with individual writing activities.

As this study is designed to measure the effect of individual and small group flipped model with WhatsApp on EFL learners' cohesion, the following question is proposed: Will there be any significant difference in the ability of EFL learners'cohesion after the implementation of small group flipped instruction model through WhatsApp with small group writing activities compared to individual flipped instruction model through WhatsApp with individual writing activities?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cohesion

A clear definition of cohesion is shown from the work of (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) which divides of cohesion into five distinguished elements: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. First, in his definition, he elucidates the term 'reference'as the use of pronouns, articles, and demonstratives. Second, substitution refers to the ability to replace superfluous words. Third, an ellipsis is the elimination of unessential words. Fourth, conjunction refers to the use of an additive, causal, adversative, continuative and adverbial phrases across phrases and sentences. Fifth, lexical cohesion covers word reiteration, super ordinates, synonyms, and collocations or word friends.Cohesion in writing is one of the determinant factors supports the quality learner's writing. The importance of cohesion in writing is initiated by Cameron et al., (1995). They claim that 15% of good writing is derived from cohesion itself. A study from Cox et. al. (1990) indicates that cohesion significantly correlated with EFL learners' writing quality. By cohesion, it can help teacher pinpoint learner's difficulty in composing a well-written paragraph.

2.2. Flipped Writing Model

The fast growth of technology and its positive influence in language teaching and learning brings flipped classroom more popular in EFL/ESL contexts(Ahmed, 2016; Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Ling, 2015). Within the context of the flipped model, the role of a teacher is devoted to classroom discussion and group activities to enhance learners' engagement in learning. Meanwhile, the learners are discussing a certain topic from online videos such as from YouTubeor other relevant sources outside of the classroom for interaction and enhancement.

Regarding learner's writing skill improvement, flipped classroom has also been implemented so far. Writing task from the flipped classroom is different from traditional writing model. The conventional writing class, the teacher, explains writing materials to the learners, asks them to practice writing afterward, and emphasizes writing errors made by the learners. In the flipped writing model, before attending the class, learners watch and learn writing concepts from videos outside class time. Then, they are engaged in interactive classroom discussion(Arnold-Garza, 2014; Chou & ChanLinh, 2015; Slezak, 2014). The option of this writing flipped model is relevant in the sense that it offers a consistent framework for the current study which also enriches flipped learning atmospheres in EFL/ESL writing course.

2.3. Small Group Learning

Several experts define small group learning in different ways. Some experts call it as 'cooperative learning' (Zamani, 2016) while some others name it 'small group learning'(Mills & Alexander, 2013), 'collaborative learning'(Brown, 2007), and 'homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings' or 'who with whom'(Baer, 2003). Small group learning is a learning activity with a small number of learners to discuss a certain issue in EFL/ESL settings with the aim to foster learners' critical thinking and their responsibility within their group members. Through small group discussion, learners develop their communicative and social competences.

There is no consensus among the experts in defining the number of small group members. (Mills & Alexander, 2013) emphasize the importance of learners' involvement and critical thinking enhancement rather than put into a specific number of a small group member. From personal experience, an ideal amount of small group learning consists of 3-5 learners where every learner can participate more optimally. Meanwhile larger groups do not provide opportunities to join because some learners dominate group activity.

Without neglecting the merits of traditional teaching method, the implementation of collaborative teaching has mushroomed among EFL/ESL teachers in their classroom instruction. It occurs because of the positive impacts of the application of small group activity itself. In Indonesian EFL context, a study conducted by Muslem et. al. (2017) revealed that small group learning has significantly helped EFL learners enhance their speaking performance. Also, as long as learners interact with the member of a group in meaningful ways, collaborative learning also fosters their critical thinking because it offers to share idea during small group discussion (Raja & Saeed, 2012).

However, beyond the above positive impact of small group learning, the implementation of small group discussion must be carefully handled because some learners tend to rely on communicative aspect rather than written form. In writing research (Hyland, 2000; Liang, 2010) reported that small group activity in writing class became limited as learners collaborated only at the pre-writing activity meanwhile at post writing they tended to rely on peer correction. Consequently, the objective of collaborative writing through small group was not practical.

2.3.1 Individual Learning

The term individual learning is sometimes called as 'autonomous learning' or 'independent learning' or 'learner-centered learning'or 'teacher-less learning' which accentuates on optimizing learners' English competency rather than the groups' target attainment. If it is compared to small group learning, the teacher has a lesser role than the small group learning. In the small group learning the teacher must facilitate learners' learning need within and among the group member. Conversely, in individual learning, the teacher only facilitates and accommodates a lesser variety of learner's need in achieving the learning objective. Further, Masouleh & Jooneghani (2012) declare that autonomous learning does not stress on individuality, but it is the way learners interact with other learners in achieving individual learning objective.

The important thing in foreign or second language learning is the roles of a teacher in utilizing learner's awareness of his/her learning styles and strategies to exploit his/her strengths and to work on their deficiency. Focusing on individual learning strategies is very urgent a study conducted by Farrell & Jacobs (2010) reveal that awareness of learning strategies make learner more successful in language learning.

Moreover, some studies on individual learning have also been reported to enhance learners' speaking and writing skill. Through the use of individual learning strategies, learner tends to be more active in classroom conversation to share his/her ideas in classroom discussions and he/she practiced writing more using computer-aided learning and flipped model(Afrilyasanti et al., 2016; Chou & ChanLinh, 2015; Sullivan & Lindgren, 2002).

2.4. WhatsApp

The use of a mobile application in language learning emerged very rapidly. Research on WhatsApp application, for example, elicits positive results for supporting language learning. A quantitative study using WhatsApp through collaborative learning to improve learners' reading comprehension and essay writing have been reported as well(Castrillo et. al., 2014; Hazea & Alzubi, 2016). WhatsApp is more popular because its wider capabilities permit learners to interact in a variety of ways such as video calls, video posting, document transfer, multimedia exchange, and online discussion/conference (Alshammari et. al., 2017).

Currently, researches on the use of WhatsApp for improving learners' writing skills rely on adult learners. Moreover, their focus of study stress on all general aspects of writing. Meanwhile, one of essential elements of writing such as cohesion is often neglected. As a media to address this gap, this paper attempts to portray WhatsApp for learners' cohesion improvement under the flipped classroom model.

3. METHODOLOGY

This quasi-experimental design belonged to quantitative with a non-equivalent control group and pre-test/post-test design. The objective of this study was aimed to find any significant difference between EFL learners' writing ability in term of cohesive writing who were taught using small group flipped model via WhatsApp with small group writing activities and individual flipped model viaWhatsApp with individual writing activities. Next, two models of experimental groups which were similar regarding EFL learners' English achievement and classroom atmospheres were implemented. A random sampling method was employed to classify the experimental group. Further, both groups were administered a pre-test followed by six weeks of treatment and a post-test.

There were two categories of experimental groups in this study, specifically: (1) the small group activity group taught using flipped model instruction through WhatsApp group with the small group writing activities and (2) the individual activity which was taught using flipped model instruction through WhatsApp with individual writing activities.

The population was all the seventh-grade learners from Sekolah Menegah Pertama Negeri (SMPN) 2 Cerme Gresik, East Java Indonesia (Public Junior High School at Cerme) which consists of five classes in the academic year 2017/2018. Two of the seventh-grade classes were administered as the sample of the study. To find the two homogeneous classes where the learners had an equal English mastery and environment, confirmation and clarification with the English teacher were done as well. The researcher also analyzed the learners' English scores to convince their equivalent English mastery. Based on the above considerations, two classes from 7-3 with 25 learners, as the experimental group, which received the treatment of the small group activity group where the small groups were taught using combination of flipped instruction model using WhatsApp with small group writing activities and from 7-4 with 25 learners, as the experimental group which received the treatment of individual action where each learner was taught using combination of flipped instruction model using WhatsApp with personal writing activities, were assigned as quasi-experimental.

Two tests, the pre-and post-test, were administered in the quasi-experimental study. The researcher prepared a writing test for the pre-test and post-test. During the pre-test and the post-test activities, the learners' writing score was measured using cohesion rubric adapted from Halliday & Hasan (1976) and Struthers et al. (2013). The elements of cohesion which were assessed were a reference, conjunction, lexical cohesion, substitution, and ellipsis. To address the issue of validity and reliability of research finding, the researcher, and an evaluator evaluated the students' writing portfolio and investigated their cohesion development. Each evaluator assessed students' cohesion score using Halliday & Hasan (1976) and Struthers et al. (2013) cohesion rubric. Cohen's Kappa statistical analysis was employed to measure inter-rater reliability. It ranged from -0.1 + 1.0.

The collected data were, then, evaluated into three phases. The first phase, normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was accomplished to discover how normal the data distribution was, and homogeneity test was also done to determine the variance in the research data. The second stage, the researcher measured the average score. The pre-test and post-test results from both experimental groups analyzed to get the average score from each writing test. The next step, a hypotheses test was carried out using a t-test.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Finding

The results of normality and homogeneity of the small group flipped model with WhatsApp (SGFMW) and individual flipped model with WhatsApp(IFMW) were statistically calculated in the following table:

Table 1 revealed that the results of the normality test from the SGFMW and IFMW groups. The index result (sig 2-tailed) from SGFMW in pre and post-test with N = 25, were .248 and .519. On the other hand, the index result (sig 2-tailed) from IFMW within the same sample N=25, were .318 and .415. Since the results of normality test from the two groups were beyond Alpha 5%, the data from both SGFMW and IFMW groups were normally distributed.

Table 1. Normality tests between the two groups

	Small Group Flipped Model with WhatsApp (SGFMW)		Individual Flipped Model with WhatsApp (IFMW)	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
N	25	25	25	25
Sign. (2-tailed)	.248	.519	.318	.415

*Significant at $p < .05$.

Table 2 illustrated the result of homogeneity test from SGFMW and IFMW groups. TheLevene's statistical computation was 2.168. Meanwhile, the P-value (sig) from the homogeneity test was 0.146 > .05 Alpha level. Since the result of P-value is bigger than the Alpha level (5%), the data were convinced as homogeneous.

Table 2. Homogeneity test

Levene's Statistics	df1	df2	Sig.
2.168	1	.67	.146

*Significant at $p < .05$.

Table 3 illustrated the result of pre-test and post-test mean score comparison between SGFMW and IFMW groups. It was found that the learners who were taught using Small Group Flipped Model viaWhatsApp (SGFMW) withsmall group writing activities had a mean score was40.72 in the pre-test with standard deviation or SD = 5.30 and the mean score of post-test was 66.17 with SD = 10.78. On the other hand, the learners who were taught using Individual Flipped Model viaWhatsApp (IFMW)

with individual writing activities, their mean score was 38.55 with SD = 7.57, and their mean score on post-test was 50.19 with SD = 12.79.

Table 3. Mean score comparison between the two groups

	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Change	Std. Deviation	
					Pre-test	Post-test
Small Group Flipped Model WA	25	40.72	66.17	22.24	5.30	10.78
Individual Flipped Model WA	25	38.55	50.19	11.64	7.57	12.79
Difference	0	.217	15.86	+9.60		

Table 4 illustrated the mean scores of learners who were taught using small group flipped model with WhatsApp (16.45) with change mean score (5.79) were higher than the mean scores of those learners who were taught using individual flipped model with WhatsApp (11.70) with change mean score (3.39) in overall elements of cohesion obtained namely reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

Table 4. Mean score comparison

	Small Group Flipped Model WA			Individual Flipped Model with WA		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Change	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
Reference	2. 37	3.66	1.26	1. 86	2.36	0.50
Substitution	2. 08	3.24	1.16	1. 92	2.34	0.42
Ellipsis	2.14	3.24	1.10	2.07	2.69	0.62
Conjunction	2.34	3.56	1.22	1.64	2.84	1.20
Lexical cohesion	1.70	2.75	1.05	1.02	1.67	0.65
Totals	10.63	16.45	5.79	8.51	11.70	3.39

Table 5 illustrated the results of an independent t-test. From the above table, it could be seen clearly that the significance level (sig. 2-tailed) .000 < 0.05. As a result, it was convinced that H_0 is rejected and H_a was accepted. It could be explained that there was significant different between the learners' cohesion test results who were taught using small group Flipped Model with WhatsApp compared to the learners' cohesion scores who were taught using individual flipped model with WhatsApp.

Table 5. Independent t-test results

	Levene's test					
	F	Sig	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Score	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	2.157	.146	5.028	.000	66.17	15.86
Equal variances not assumed			5.049	.000	50.19	15.86

4.2. Discussion

The present study aimed at comparing the effect between EFL learners who were taught using small group flipped model via WhatsApp with small group writing activities and individual flipped model via WhatsApp with individual writing activities.The result revealed that the EFL learners who were taught using small group flipped model via WhatsApp with small group writing activities significantly achieved better than those who were taught using individual flipped model via WhatsApp with individual writing activities. The result also indicates that EFL learners' writing post-test scores within the small group flipped model via WhatsApp with small group writing activities are statistically higher than their pre-test scores.

It is also found that small group flipped model via WhatsApp with small group writing activities support key principles in effective collaborative learning in a flipped writing class with the media of WhatsApp. As proposed by Raja & Saeed (2012), the principle of collaborative learning (Arnold-Garza, 2014 and Hazea & Alzubi, 2016) flexibility of flipped model and WhatsApp have been the foundation for the current research. In the flipped model through WhatsApp media allows the learners to view the concept of cohesion from lecture video through their WhatsApp including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion more flexible, dynamic and interactive classroom activities. Consequently, it leads to more successful writing cohesion ability among Indonesian EFL learners. Such a repot has been supported by several researchers. For example, Afrilyasanti et al. (2016) report that in a flipped model situation help EFL learners succeed in writing using computer-aided flipped learning conditions.

Regarding collaborative learning, it seems that a small group flipped model via WhatsApp with a small group writing activity exerts a positive effect on the learning cohesion. This result corresponds with the findings of Muslem et al. (2017) in the study of small group and individual learning approaches. They claim that small group learning activities provide a better impact on EFL learners' speaking performance. However, it is challenging to determine how strong the impact of small groups collaborative learning is and whether it directly affects learners' cohesion mastery. In addition, a previous study (Muslem et al., 2017; Raja & Saeed, 2012) demonstrate that collaborative learning has a positive effect on learners' English mastery. With the implementation of small group activities foster their speaking ability because they can interact and share their ideas with the member of the group during learning in meaningful ways. The finding also implies that small group writing activities assist learners' cohesion ability as from the small group writing discussions, the learners can discuss, share ideas, explore the concept through video, reflect their thought so that their critical thinking can be fostered as well.

Regarding writing materials specifically discussing cohesion such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion from flipped model via WhatsApp, exert a beneficial impact on learners' cohesion development. Finding of this study corresponds with the finding of Suranakkharin (2017) in a study of flipped instruction on learners' collocation ability.Suranakkharin proposes that learning materials designed based on flipped model learning produces a positive impact on how EFL learners perceive the learning situation and how they are exposed to the process of learning in more flexible and ubiquitous. The finding implies that the writing cohesion materials or sources designed concerning video lecture and exercise through a WhatsApp mobile application greatly assists learners for learning every time, everywhere both inside and outside of class time.

More specifically, as it was shown from the table 4 above, the EFL learners got the lowest mean scores on their lexical cohesion mastery. The result also illustrates that among the five elements of cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion) lexical cohesion is considered as the most difficult aspect of cohesion.This finding is supported by Suranakkharin (2017) who remarks that collocation mastery is one of the most difficult things as the central aspects of communicative competence for ideas fluency and accuracy among Thai undergraduate's learners. It happens as the lexical cohesion has fixed patterns in the native English context and most EFL learners learn English in the different setting and context. Consequently, it is quite difficult for them to produce

good lexical cohesion in their writing. This study offers EFL learners to learn lexical cohesion from the video lecture shared by the teacher via their WhatsApp so that they can learn lexical cohesion more authentically and they obtain the real contexts of lexical cohesion.

5. CONCLUSION

This research investigated to compare whether the learners taught by small group flipped model via WhatsApp with small groups writing activities were more successful in writing cohesive paragraph namely reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion than those by individual flipped model via WhatsApp with different writing activities. Overall, the findings revealed that learners' cohesion score outcomes improved significantly. The results also demonstrated that learners who were taught using small group flipped model with WhatsApp performed better than those learners who were trained using individual flipped model flipped model with WhatsApp.

It is recommended for the teacher of writing to implement the combination of flipped classroom and WhatsApp as a supporting learning media through small group discussion model in the teaching and learning process and integrated it as part of EFL/ESL curriculum. As it was also shown from the finding, the learners got lowest score of cohesion elements rested on lexical cohesion (word reiteration, super ordinates, synonyms, and collocations). Those lexical cohesion elements were considered as the most difficult aspect of cohesion. Consequently, further study to investigate one of the aforementioned lexical cohesion elements becomes worth investigating.

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