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USE OF SNAPCHAT TO ENHANCE PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE WRITING OF PERSONAL INFORMATION



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ABSTRACT

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Keywords

Snapchat Social media Primary school English as second language (ESL) Learners Writing skill Sentence construction Personal information Simple sentence. Writing is one of the fundamental skills in language production. Writing simple sentences is therefore important, especially for pupils learning English as second language (ESL). Teachers can use multiple ways to teach how to write simple sentences. However, pupils need a platform wherein they can explore and express their ideas and observe their peers' work to develop their skills. In this Covid-19 pandemic era, online learning plays an essential role in providing a mobile platform wherein pupils can learn without any restrictions. Teachers use social media applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram as a bridge to convey the teaching and learning processes and encourage active engagement amongst the pupils. Only a few studies attempt to investigate the use of Snapchat, which is also a social media application that can be used in the teaching and learning processes. Other scholars suggested that Snapchat may have negative effects on the academic development of pupils. This study sought to investigate the implementation of Snapchat to enhance primary school ESL learners' sentence construction of personal information through pre and post-writing tests. It employs a paired sample t-test to compare the results. The participants comprised 30 Year 2 students from a national type primary school. Findings reveal that most of the pupils improved sufficiently in writing simple sentences of personal information using Snapchat. Some limitations and possible avenues for further research are also discussed.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is one of the few studies which have investigated the use of Snapchat in teaching and learning of English among primary school pupils. The paper's primary contribution is to add on to the body of literature on the advantages of using Snapchat for writing. It sought to measure the extent to which Snapchat can enhance the sentence construction skills of primary school ESL learners to express personal information.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amongst the four learning skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing), writing is the most laborious skill to be achieved by the Malaysian English as second language (ESL) learners. Both learners and teachers agree that teaching and learning how to write the English language are extremely challenging (Chandran, Plaindaren, Pavadai, & Yunus, 2019). Many pupils can speak in English but they struggle in writing due to their lack of interest

(Philip, Tan, & Jandar, 2019). Previous methods of teaching and learning English have failed to develop language competency amongst the learners as they depend mainly on lecturing and are mostly done in the traditional chalkand-talk method (Al-Jarrah, Al-Jarrah, Talafhah, & Mansor, 2019; Gillett, 2009; Nair & Hui, 2018; Shakib, Abd, Mohd, Heidari, & Panah, 2020; Tan & Farashaiyan, 2012).

In Malaysia, teaching how to write well has always been a challenge for teachers. The most effective way to develop and nurture pupils' writing skills is still unknown since different studies provide varying results (Ang & Tan, 2018). Although the initiatives by the Malaysian education ministry cannot be considered as failures, they cannot be entirely considered successful either because of the proposed additional hours for the English lessons. Consequently, administration and teachers have shown enthusiasm and adopted various approaches and tools to improve pupils learning of their second language. However, these initiatives are being questioned as pupils still could not produce a satisfying performance in their daily classroom tasks or in examinations.

As technologies are playing a vital role in today's educational development, social media applications are perceived as a great platform for ESL learners to convey their views and ideas as these applications encourage individuality within them (Wil, Yunus, & Suliman, 2019). Social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram are being utilised as information and communication platforms for educational purposes (Hashim et al., 2018). However, the study by Wil et al. (2019) proves that 97.5% of 40 secondary school students access social media, but none of them (0%) use Snapchat for language learning. Students perceive that Facebook and Instagram are the only platforms that can be used to improve their language learning, and Snapchat is only for snapping pictures or recording videos.

This study therefore explores Snapchat as a tool to enhance primary school ESL learners' sentence construction of personal information. Specifically, this study aims to measure to what extent Snapchat can enhance primary school ESL learners' sentence construction of personal information.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Integration of Social Media in Writing Skills

Zheng, Yim, and Warschauer (2018) stated that social media provides considerable opportunities for ESL learners to be occupied with daily writing activities. On these platforms, teachers are not required to spend their energy and time to develop self-made teaching and learning materials. Instead, they can just share the activities from online resources to occupy pupils' learning time with such activities. Moreover, Laire, Casteleyn, and Mottart (2012) believes social media allows pupils to learn the techniques and monitor their works by encouraging them to practice good writing by adjusting alternative sentence structures and omitting improper articles. When pupils are instructed to post their works on Facebook, WhatsApp or Instagram, they are encouraged to revise and edit their work just to ensure that it fits well. Hence, they feel responsible in producing good work as they anticipate judgment and feedback from many people who can access their work online.

By investigating pupils' perception of using social media in writing performance development of English language, Al-Jarrah., Mansor, Talafhah, and Al-Jarrah (2019) revealed that 78 respondents out of 132 secondary school students (59.09%) agreed that social media plays a dominant role in writing development. These students strongly agreed that the use of social media is not difficult for them at the school level. They also prefer to use social media as a learning tool because it is easy to operate and extensively motivates them to improve their writing. However, David (2001); Cai (2001); and Dovey (2010) argue that writing is an effective tool in education and working domain; therefore, it should not be provoked through social platform texts such as WhatsApp. They explained that social media are generally affecting students' language in writing in terms of grammar, spelling and sentence construction. Thus, writing skill deficiencies need to be given major attention from early stage to make sure it does not affect students writing performances as they tend to use abbreviations such as 'plz' instead of 'please' or 'btw' instead of 'between' in their essays due to the influence of texting in social media.

2.2. Snapchat in the Classroom Setting

Snapchat is an image transforming application invented by Reggie Brown, Evan Spiegel and Bobby Murphy during their understudies at Stanford University. The application was officially introduced in September 2011. By May 2015, nearly 100 million people were downloading the application daily, and more than 18% of social media users utilised Snapchat (Akram & Kumar, 2017).

An educator in Ireland used Snapchat in his study by adopting a different phenomenon to give 'colourful lessons with a dollop of good humour' (O'Brien, 2016). According to the tutor, Snapchat is extremely effective as it keeps the students engaged throughout learning. O'Brien (2016) also showed that Snapchat can be used in classroom activities as 'reminders of upcoming homework, projects or tests' and an icebreaker before the lesson 'by asking an interesting question on Snapchat beforehand'. He further added that Snapchat provides time to the learners to think about the topic and arouses their interests.

Miller (2017) shared on his blog 15 ways of how teachers can use Snapchat in a classroom setting. He highlighted on how to engage pupils with interesting contents by using speech bubbles and on how to use Snapchat to post a virtual presentation of lessons. Walter (2017) also suggested that Snapchat should be utilised as a learning tool rather than for the reason of keeping up with new technologies in classrooms. Given that many scholars concluded that Snapchat can be a precursor for writing, ESL learners, especially primary school learners, must be assisted to enhance their writing skills in a fun and meaningful way.

Thus, this study aims to incorporate Snapchat in the current teaching and learning processes to encourage and promote a high level of critical thinking in the form of digital literacy.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Question: To enhance primary school ESL learners' sentence construction of personal information, this study was conducted amongst students who scored average grades in their writing tests on the basis of classroom assessments. This study addressed one question: To what extent Snapchat can enhance primary school ESL learners' sentence construction of personal information?

Participants and Setting: This study took place in a national level school in a semi-urban area in Johor, Malaysia. The school serves over 2500 students from Year 1 up to Year 6. A total of thirty Year 2 ESL learners taught by the researcher were selected as research participants for this study by using the stratified sampling method. They were selected on the basis of their proficiency level and mixed results in the school-based assessment, which is typically conducted to measure pupils' writing skills. This group was represented by 15 boys and 15 girls. All students were non-native speakers, and none of them were identified for special education services. Although of a young age, the Year 2 students selected for this study were IT savvy and deemed to be able to handle Snapchat.

Data collection: A quantitative research design was employed in this study. Pre and post-writing tests were used as instruments to measure the outcomes before and after the use of Snapchat to enhance ESL learners' sentence construction of simple information. The same set of questions were used in both tests: with 5 topics from Year 2 Common European Framework of References syllabus, such as 'My Self, 'My Hobby', 'My Pet', 'My Favourite Food' and 'My Family'. Following 'Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran' (the English Language Curriculum Framework), the participants were asked to write 3 simple sentences for each topic given. The total marks for the test were 15. Copies of the test can be found in Appendix A.

Snapchat to write personal information in simple sentences: Snapchat is an application used as a means to talk with friends, share photos, videos and play around with filters. The pictures uploaded in Snapchat are deleted automatically after 24 hours. This function of the application is its most exciting part. The researcher used this application as a tool to arouse the participants' attention and interests and enhance their sentence construction skills in writing personal information.

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A pre-writing test was conducted before the use of Snapchat. The participants were divided into two groups and assigned to install the Snapchat application on their own or with the help of their parents at home. The researcher met with the participants every day during the English language lesson for guided instruction about writing personal information in simple sentences. Firstly, the pupils were guided on how to write simple sentences for the topic of 'My Self' before the use of Snapchat. Then, the Snapchat application was used to guide the pupils on how to write sentences with creative pictures on giving personal information through the following steps:

- 1. The teacher creates a group in Snapchat and invites all the participants to join.
- 2. The teacher uploads the topic of the day. (Example: Day 1 My Self)
- 3. The pupils individually upload a picture and write 3 corresponding sentences creatively with filters and colourful text fonts in the group within 24 hours. (Example: A portrait with 3 corresponding sentences)
- 4. The teacher selects 10 posts amongst the pupils' submitted work randomly and projects them in the class during the English lesson.
- 5. The teacher provides feedback to emphasise the correct sentence construction without abbreviations, incorrect use of spelling and grammar mistakes.
 - Table-1. Pre- Writing Test scores Student Pre-writing test scores (Out of 15) \mathcal{Q} \mathcal{B} $\overline{7}$ $\overline{7}$ $\mathbf{6}$ \mathcal{Q} Mean 7.7Standard 2.5Deviation
- 6. A new topic is given on the next day, and Steps 2 to 5 are repeated.

Source Pre-Writing Corrected Test Sheets:

After reading their classmates' sentences, pupils discuss and take part in feedback sessions. All the corrections made by the teacher are explained in detail to ensure that the pupils are learning the correct sentence construction in writing personal information. Finally, the pupils participated in the post-writing test.

Data Analysis: The results from pre and post-writing tests were compared to investigate the effectiveness of Snapchat and the pupils' improvement in writing personal information in simple sentences. As the pupils demonstrated substantial improvement between the tests, a paired sample t-test was used to determine if the findings were statistically significant.

4. FINDINGS

The results and the mean score of the pre and post-writing tests are tabulated in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. The data derived were used to analyse whether the use of Snapchat could enhance primary school ESL learners' sentence construction of personal information. The results of the pre-writing test are shown in Table 1.

Student Post-writing test score (Out of 15)									
1	15								
2	13								
3	15								
4	12								
5	15								
6	10								
7	11								
8	11								
9	15								
10	10								
11	10								
12	15								
13	11								
14	11								
15	9								
16	13								
17	10								
18	10								
19	9								
20	10								
21	12								
22	8								
23	11								
24	15								
25	15								
26	11								
27	12								
28	11								
29	10								
30	12								
Mean	11.7								
Standard Deviation	2.1								

Table-2. Post- Writing Test scores.

Source Post Writing Corrected Test Sheets:

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During the pre-test, Student 19 obtained the least score of 2, whereas 6 participants, namely, Students 3, 5, 9, 12, 24 and 25, obtained the highest score of 11. Most of the participants showed an average performance with the moderate marks of 6 and 7, and none of them was able to score full marks of 15. They had difficulty in expressing their ideas in sentences, and grammatical mistakes were prevalent in the pre-writing test. The results of the post-writing test are shown in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the participants were able to score higher marks in the post-writing test than the prewriting test. For example, whilst the pupils were only able to score 7 marks on average in the pre-writing test, they were able to score 11 or 12 marks easily after the use of Snapchat. Student 19, who was only able to write 2 sentences out of 15 sentences during the pre-test, made the most satisfactory improvement in the post-writing test by scoring 9 marks.

Student 19 always showed the least participation during the English lessons, especially in writing activities in the classroom. She felt extremely nervous and was scared to attempt any writing activities, especially writing simple sentences, due to the lack of self-confidence. However, she was eager to learn and posted her personal information with corresponding pictures by using filters through Snapchat. Her sentence construction of personal information was improved gradually. Her writing skills also grew, as shown in her score in the post-writing test.

Although Student 1 is an excellent student who is capable to score high grades in all assessments, she only achieved an average score in the pre-writing test. In fact, she could not score good marks in writing exercises partly due to her poor grammar knowledge, spelling mistakes and incorrect sentence construction. Feedback given by the teacher after each topic posted in Snapchat helped her realise the mistakes. Consequently, she was able to show a significant improvement in her post-writing test by scoring full marks of 15.

The quantitative data indicated that the participants' sentence construction of personal information is far better as compared to their pre-test scores.

The paired sample t-test results are shown in Table 3.

Paired Sample Statistics

Table-3. Paired Sample Test.

Taneu Sample Statistics											
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean						
Pair 1	Pre- Writing Test	7.6667	30	2.50975	0.45822						
	Post- Writing Test	11.7333	30	2.13240	0.38932						

Paired Sample T-Test

Paired Differences								
				95% Confidence				
				Interval of the				
		Std.	Std. Error	Difference				Sig.
	Mean	Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	(2-tailed)
Pair 1 Pre-Writin Test Post-Writin Test	-	1.17248	0.21406	-4.50448	-3.62885	-18.997	29	0.000

Source: IBM SPSS - Descriptive Statistics.

A paired sample t-test was conducted to test the difference between the pre and post-writing tests after the use of Snapchat in the sentence construction of personal information. The test revealed a significant difference in primary ESL students' scores between pre and post-writing tests with t(29) = -18.997, p < 0.001. The positive increment of the mean score of the pre and post-writing tests supported the proposed advantages of using Snapchat in teaching ESL. The benefits of using the features in the application assisted the pupils to improve their writing with interest.

5. DISCUSSION

The results in this study show a statistically significant improvement in sentence construction of personal information after the use of Snapchat among the primary school students in a simple sentence writing practice. In the beginning, the participants struggled with writing simple sentences with correct grammar and spelling. During the pre-writing test, six students showed incorrect use of sentence construction. For example, one student wrote a sentence as 'Hobby I play football on Friday' under the topic of 'My Hobby', whereas another student identified his/her age with a sentence 'I is years old eight' for the topic of 'My Self'. Before the pupils identified their grammar mistakes on the basis of their peers' work in Snapchat and the teacher's feedback in the classroom, they were writing incorrect sentences or confused with their native language. Therefore, although the pupils need to work further to improve their writing skills, teachers play an important role in helping them write effectively in the target language and express themselves appropriately (Nyasimi, 2009).

In the pre-test stage, the pupils continued to struggle to write 3 sentences on the given topic. They did not have much idea on what can be written to share their personal information with their classmates. In their prewriting test, the pupils came up with the same idea to write 3 sentences for the same topic. For example, for the topic of 'My Pet', most of the students wrote:

- 1. My pet is a cat.
- 2. My pet is a parrot.
- 3. My pet is a hamster.

Although the above sentences were correct, all of them were written with the same concept but with different names of the pets. However, after they started to write more sentences, they were able to write 3 other sentences with different ideas for the same topic as below:

- 1. My pet is a cat.
- 2. Its name is Comel.
- 3. It is white in colour.

All of the participants eagerly posted their pets' pictures and tried to share information about their pets. In the end, their enthusiasm and interest triggered their mind to write varying sentences corresponding to creative images. As a social media platform, Snapchat encouraged the pupils to learn the techniques and monitor their works by allowing them to practice good writing (Laire et al., 2012).

'My Self was the only topic in which all participants could score full marks without any grammar mistakes or incorrect use of spelling in the post-writing test. Given that writing issues mainly occur due to the ineptitude in syntax, consistency, expansion of the idea, selection of the content and insufficient or incorrect use of vocabulary, the pupils are liable to face difficulties in writing sentences at early stages (Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016). During the pre-writing test, 12 participants were not able to score full marks for the topic 'My Self'. However, they were able to show improvements in their post-writing test as they managed to enhance their ideas and vocabularies by looking into other pupils' sentences in the application.

The pupils found Snapchat easier to use than books or other text materials as it is revealed in the significant improvement in the post-test. It can be concluded that these participants preferred to write personal information on social media platforms due to their ease of use and extensive motivation that they derived from it (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). Using Snapchat is proven to be one of the easiest and helpful tools as it allows teachers to interact with the students and conduct teaching and learning processes at their homes (Hanif, Asrowi, & Sunardi, 2018).

6. LIMITATIONS

The use of Snapchat is applicable only to pupils who have mobile phones at home. Second, students from lowincome family background or rural areas face problems in acquiring a mobile phone and having Internet access to use the Snapchat application. Thus, this strategy to enhance pupils' sentence construction skills in writing personal information is only applicable to students who have mobile phones and Internet access.

Another limitation is due to time constraints and lack of proper sample size, this study could not have a control group. Although this study shows a statistically significant improvement in ESL learners' sentence construction of personal information, the suitability of Snapchat as a strategy and its contributions to the significant improvement between the pre and post-writing tests still need further investigation.

The third limitation was a possible involvement of students' parents in this research. It is quite possible that a few parents might have shown interest in the task assigned to their children and they supported them to complete the task. Due to this limitation, it is difficult to predict unbiased pupils' progress in terms of their sentence construction of personal information.

7. CONCLUSION

In the current context, learners must always keep abreast with use of technological applications in acquiring language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. This study shows that most of the pupils have improved in their sentence construction of personal information through the use of Snapchat. The pupils felt that Snapchat was an excellent platform in their writing development.

Although the use of Snapchat conveys some weaknesses in pupils' writing skills, this study provides advantages of social media integration, especially Snapchat, in pupils' writing performance. The pupils who used this application were more motivated and they could express their thoughts and ideas in their sentences freely. They were also able to correct themselves through discussion and develop a good rapport with their teacher. With the understanding of existing literature, this study hopes to provide a guideline and convince other researchers that Snapchat is a convenient tool to convey the teaching and learning processes quickly during this crisis time. Finally, this study can also help learners learn better and prepare them towards to the needs of IR 4 (Industrial Revolution 4.0).

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