I WHATSAPP AN IGUANA: AN ATTEMPT TO APPLY UBIQUITOUS LEARNING

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Abstract
This paper aims at presenting how Whatsapp provides alternative method to enhance writing skills on personal letter for senior high school student. This methodWhatsapps inspired by the concept called ubiquitous learning (U-Learning), which means “learning supported by ICT resources held anytime, anywhere and fits the context of the learner” (de Sousa Monteiro et al., 2014). Participants were 40 11th grade students in one class in Cirebon High School. A short story in the form of personal letter entitled I Wanna Iguana by Karen Kaufman Orloff was used as main learning source and the mobile version of the story was sent to the class Whatsapp group along with the reading comprehension questions and the personal letter template. The study was conducted for three weeks in the middle of the second semester year 2017. Contrary to the basic face-to-face teaching and learning, the using of Whatsapp group demonstrates how mobile technology can be fully integrated in an educational context to support students’ learning beyond the classroom. Another advantages of using Whatsapp group is the fact that learning become the responsibility of learners and may take place through observation, trial and error, asking for help, conversing with others, reading to stories, reflecting on a one’s personal event, or stimulated by general interests.

Keywords: Whatsapp, Writing, Personal Letter, Ubiquitous Learning

Introduction
Students nowadays from Z generation are brought up with different writing style. Different from the previous generation, the Z generation are said to be a digital native. Growing up in an environment where technology has become daily tools, they learn to communicate through written media by using Instant Messaging (IM). Through IM, they can communicate not only by writing but also by using symbols or emoticons and pictures to express what they are feeling.

Many providers have advanced the service of regular texting to more sophisticated features with additional services that enable the users to send documents, media, audio, and even video. The features also enable consumers to have a group chat in one time. One of the providers that enable the students to communicate in such way is Whatsapp.

According to Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) Whatsapp is the most integrative of all, mainly because of its multiple of options, simplicity, accessibility, and efficiency. As a means of sending and receiving messages between individuals or groups, Whatsapp includes various functions; text messages, images, audio files, video files, and links to websites. Over the last two years, the application has become very popular, gaining over 350 million users and is named the most downloaded application in 127 countries (Cohavi, 2013).

The ideas of using Whatsapp in language teaching have come from names of greater importance from across the globe. Educators have started to recognise the emergence of technologies and examine their influence on student behavior and performance. While there is glaring evidence to suggest that these technologies have a huge impact on the social development of adolescents, an even more urgent issue for classroom teachers is what effects the technologies give on the academic development of young people (Fogg, 2008).
Haines (2016), a teacher trainer from Mexico shared 25 ways of how to make good use of Whatsapp for language learning including gap fill, incorrect sentences, describe a process and create a picture dictionary. Further, he said that Whatsapp can help overcome the obstacles of the use of technology in ELT and can take advantage of the technology that students have on their phones.

Santarossa and Castillo (2017) two university educators from Argentina applied their teaching method of What’s Up in the Classroom for English language learning for four skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and found that it was amazing how an app as simple and everyday life as Whatsapp could change so much the classroom reality and bring some of the outside, real world into the classroom. They also encourage all teachers to try their method.

The expanding phenomenon of Whatsapp group chat in education usage inspires the author as an English teacher to use the application in her own classroom. This best practice reported how Whatsapp group has been able to facilitate the students of Cirebon High School to master the Personal Letter learning material in English language subject.

Methodology
The implementation of the best practice includes four steps.

Identifying Learning Material
Based on the national curriculum of 2013 imposed in senior high school students in Indonesia, one of the basic competences that have to be mastered by the eleventh graders is Personal Letter. The students are required to be able to differentiate the social function, text structure, and language features of personal letter. They are also obligated to be able to create personal letter in the form of written and spoken text based on the appropriate context. Personal letter was chosen since it is the closest thing to SMS yet it is not the desirable learning material to be learnt by the students, especially in written traditional context.

Learning Process
This learning method spent three weeks long in teaching with only 90 minutes spent every week in the classroom setting and the rest of the time, U-learning with Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) was applied.

Within the first classroom meeting, the students were introduced to the concept of personal letter. A short story entitled “I Wanna Iguana” was used as the text example of personal letter. This short story tells about Alex, a young boy who wanted to have an Iguana as a pet. Alex sent many short letters to his to persuade her so she would allow him to pet the Iguana. The letters between Alex and his mom are perfect examples to be given to the students so that they could study the social function, generic structure, and language features of personal letter. The Whatsapp group was then formed by the end of the first meeting. The group was then used to continue the learning activities.

In the second week, class discussion was held to discuss all the texts had been sent to the Whatsapp group. The students were then given time to discuss on how the technology has changed the way they communicate. After the discussion, the students were then given the assignment to send personal letter through their own Whatsapp number to one of their friends, family members, or respected teachers.

The final meeting in the third week was used to discuss all the letters had sent to the group including the given comments and to have reflection on the conducted U-Learning with Whatsapp group.

Learning Assessment
The learning assessment was conducted by using authentic assessment. In other words, the assessments were done along with the learning process. Every product (see: learning mastery), online quiz, and the interaction of students in the Whatsapp group were assessed and categorized by cognitive, writing skills, and attitude score.

Learning Reflection
A simple class discussion to gain an insight of reflection towards the conducted learning method was held by the end of the third meeting. This was to address both benefits and drawbacks the students and teacher encounter during the learning process.
Finding and Discussion

The findings indicate that constant availability of Whatsapp buddy and learning anytime anywhere has made Whatsapp a new and convenient tool for teaching learning activity. Advantages (technical, educational or instructional) out pars the disadvantages.

Learning Mastery

There are three main result can be obtained from the part of students’ learning mastery which will be describe in the following.

The first result is from cognitive factor. From the reading quiz and progress test, more than 90% of 40 students get score above 80 (10 points higher that the school minimum standard score). This data means that from the knowledge, students were able to differentiate the social function, language features and generic structure or personal letter. They have met the minimum requirements of basic competence addressed in the curriculum 2013.

The more satisfying result can be seen from the students’ writing skills. In accordance to what stated in the curriculum, the students are obligated to be able to create a personal letter telling about their own activity. The learning method has been able to transform the dull image of writing traditional personal letter, into an up to date activity of writing personal text through Whatsapp.

The letter sent by student #7 depicts the simple yet complete form and structure of personal letter.

The student sent what should be a short message to her mother asking for scout uniform. Due to the context that she needed to send the text in the form of personal letter, she adjusted the structure. She added the date and the greeting before and after the content.

According to Grace and Sudarwati (2014), a complete personal letter consists of four main parts; the date (when the letter was written), the greeting, the content, and the closing.

Another personal letter was sent by student #12 further way beyond the teaching and learning process.

The letter was sent to a long time friend who lives in different island. Even though the letter does not follow a very complete structure of personal letter, still it can be granted a serious improvement in the way they use the technology to communicate in English.

Increasing learning motivation and writing confidence due to the learning method applied are two of some attitudes that can be taken into score. Other important attitudes that can be generated from the U-learning is honesty. Most of the assignments and quiz were all done online and outside the classroom. The condition lead the students to be honest, since the teacher was not available to watch them while they were doing the assignments as well as the test.

Other learning attitudes revealed from the learning process are respect and patient. Since everything that was done in Whatsapp group could be read and accessed by all the group members, the students were expected to be respectful to one another when they had the intention to give comments or opinions or even
just questions. They are also expected to be patient whenever they need the teacher to give reply or comment on their works since there was no time limitation that they could reach anyone or posted anything in the group even outside the office hours and holidays.

Learning Benefits
Some learning benefits can be gathered based on the observation done during the learning process and during the discussion and reflection held after the learning process. According to the students, the creation of Whatsapp group had four main benefits in teaching and learning setting. These benefits are not only for the personal letter learning materials but for learning in general.

The first benefit is that the group enable the teacher to communicate with the students, send information, manage the class, and help students to feel up to date. This fact has stimulated the idea for the students to also form different Whatsapp group for different subject and different teacher. The second benefit is that the group is able to grooming a positive social atmosphere even though it is not in the homeroom class. The students who are shy in the classroom during face-to-face interaction, are able to feel a sense of belonging and community through Whatsapp group that also enables them to share information and work as a team. The third benefit is that the students can use the group as a learning media to improve the possibility to access the learning materials and the performance of learning activities.

Learning Challenges
Despite of some benefits, there are some drawbacks that can hinder the implementation of Whatsapp group and U-learning. The main technical problem is the fact that not all students possess a Smartphone or the application. In that case, the teacher is required to be more creative and to maintain the connection with those students through other communication tools, usually by simple text messages.

Another challenge is caused by the teachers’ availability online, leading the students to demand a “here and now” solution. Thus, the students’ attitudes of being respectful and being patient are taken into account as important score.

The final challenge is honesty issue. Questions were asked by other teacher when they found out about the U-learning applied. How can you be sure students are not cheating? There seems to be a common justification that U-learning or online learning in general open up the door for students to become more mischievous and dishonest than they ever would dare in a more traditional classroom setting. What needs to be held in mind is the fact that someone who wants to behave dishonestly will probably figure out how to do so regardless the circumstances.

Conclusions
Writing is one of the language skills that require intense training to master it. The availability of the short message feature on Whatsapp becomes one of the media that can be used by learners to practice writing. Short message service on Whatsapp can be used to allow learners to write messages with acceptable language structures and features. Messages sent in the form of personal letters are successfully trained so that students are able to arrange text of personal letter in context. Briefly it can be concluded that the strategy of U-learning by ways of mobile-assisted language learning or technology-based learning using tools such as smart phones that can be used anytime, anywhere and in accordance with the context of learners has managed to deliver the students to be able to write a personal letter with a very good quality.

References
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