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The Effectiveness of the "Busuu Platform" in Improving the Writing Skills of 1st Grade Junior High School Students in Medan

Kezia Nur Elizanti Purba[1]
Diah Safitri Armin[2]
[12] State Islamic University of North Sumatera, Indonesia

[1] kezia0304213028@uinsu.ac.id
[2] diahsafithriarmin@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Busuu platform in improving the writing skills of 1st grade junior high school students. To address the issue of students' low English writing proficiency, a quasi-experimental design was used with pre-test and post-test control groups. The sample consisted of 40 students, divided equally into an experimental group that used the Busuu platform and a control group that received conventional instruction. Writing tests were administered before and after the treatment as the primary research instruments. The independent sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the groups' post-test results (p = 0.045), with the experimental group scoring an average of 81.75 and the control group 71.90. Although there was a slight decline from the experimental group's pre-test average (82.50), their post-test performance remained higher than that of the control group. These findings indicate that the Busuu platform is effective in enhancing students' writing skills. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers incorporate digital platforms like Busuu to foster more engaging and interactive English learning environments.

Keywords : *Busuu platform, Educational technology, English learning, Writing skills*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki efektivitas platform Busuu dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa kelas 1 SMP. Untuk mengatasi masalah rendahnya kemampuan menulis bahasa Inggris siswa, digunakan desain quasi-eksperimental dengan kelompok kontrol pra-tes dan pasca-tes. Sampel terdiri dari 40 siswa, dibagi secara merata menjadi kelompok eksperimen yang menggunakan platform Busuu dan kelompok kontrol yang menerima pengajaran konvensional. Ujian menulis diberikan sebelum dan setelah perlakuan sebagai instrumen penelitian utama. Uji t sampel independen menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik antara hasil post-test kedua kelompok (p = 0.045), dengan kelompok eksperimen memperoleh rata-rata 81,75 dan kelompok kontrol 71,90. Meskipun ada penurunan ringan dari rata-rata pra-tes kelompok eksperimen (82,50), kinerja pasca-tes mereka tetap lebih tinggi daripada kelompok kontrol. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa platform Busuu efektif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa. Oleh karena itu, disarankan agar guru mengintegrasikan platform digital seperti Busuu untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar Bahasa Inggris yang lebih menarik dan interaktif.

Kata Kunci : *Keterampilan menulis, Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, Platform Busuu, Teknologi pendidikan*

Introduction

Writing is one of the core language skills that plays a crucial role in enabling learners to express their thoughts clearly and coherently. However, it is widely acknowledged as the most challenging skill to master, particularly for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners (Trimbur, 2013). In Indonesia, many junior high school students still face difficulties in organizing ideas, using appropriate grammar, and selecting vocabulary when writing in English. This situation highlights a need for improved instructional approaches that can effectively support the development of writing skills among EFL learners.

Traditional classroom methods are often teacher-centered, rigid, and lack sufficient feedback, which may result in low levels of student engagement and motivation (Hasmi, 2025). These methods rarely provide personalized support, making it difficult for students to address their individual weaknesses in writing. In response to these issues, technology-based learning has emerged as an alternative solution. Digital learning platforms can offer flexible, interactive, and self-paced environments that are better suited to the learning styles of today's students. They allow for immediate feedback, adaptive instruction, and gamified content that can help boost learner motivation and writing performance (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

One such platform is Busuu, a mobile-assisted language learning application designed to support all four core English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Busuu features personalized learning paths, smart review tools, spaced repetition, and instant feedback, making it a potentially powerful tool for enhancing writing skills. The platform is accessible via mobile app or web browser, offering convenience for students who may face technological limitations such as limited storage or app access. Although several studies have explored the general benefits of Busuu, there is still a lack of empirical evidence specifically addressing its effectiveness in improving writing skills among junior high school students in the Indonesian context (Nee, 2014; Huda, 2017).
Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Busuu platform in improving the English writing skills of seventh-grade junior high school students. Through a quasi-experimental design involving pre-test and post-test control groups, this study compares the writing performance of students taught using Busuu with those taught through conventional methods. It focuses on specific aspects of writing improvement, including grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. The findings are expected to provide insights for English teachers and curriculum developers on how mobile-based learning platforms can be used as effective supplementary tools in writing instruction.

Method

This study used a quasi-experimental method with a pretest and posttest, and a control group, to see if using the Busuu platform improved the English writing skills of seventh-grade students at a junior high school in Medan. This research approach fits with Creswell's (2012) view that quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to explain, predict, or control phenomena of interest. The core objective of this research was to conduct a comparative analysis of student writing performance, as measured by pretest and posttest scores, across two distinct groups. The experimental group actively utilized the Busuu application during their in-class instruction, while the control group received traditional teaching methods, devoid of direct app interaction, yet both groups were exposed to Busuu-derived learning

resources. By offering easy-to-learn and engaging learning experiences, Busuu was utilized to both educate and inspire students in English, particularly in writing. It was a way to show that learning English is not always dull and difficult, as is often assumed in classrooms. In a study that was conducted field by field, Busuu was used as supplementary medium to school textbooks and helped improve pupils' writing skills.

To select a group of 40 students, researchers used purposive sampling and assessed two requirements: reliable internet access and the ownership of personal digital devices, such as smartphones or tablets. The digital learning environment required full participation, based on these parameters. During the study, the dataset consisted of student writing assessment scores from both pretest and posttest evaluations, as well as outcomes derived from writing assignments during the intervention period. Both the pretest and posttest evaluations retained their original format and scoring criteria, enabling a thorough assessment of writing proficiency, including grammar, vocabulary usage patterns, coherence, and organizational skills. In the study, participants in the control group were taught through group chat sessions with researchers, while the experimental group used the same materials but participated in face-to-face sessions. The purpose of this two-week interaction was to maintain regular communication and consistent instruction in both settings. The same teaching materials were used in both study groups during the three-day intervention period and were sourced directly from the Busuu website. The experimental group engaged in in-class learning activities facilitated by the Busuu app, with teachers closely monitoring proper usage and student engagement. On the other hand, the control group received instruction through traditional pedagogical methods, without the assistance of the app, though the content remained consistent with that of the Busuu platform.

Before the final assessment, both groups were given a supplemental writing task to assess their understanding of the material. This task required them to write a short paragraph introducing themselves and describing a friend. It aimed to determine whether the students had understood the material presented during the intervention phase. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to evaluate the differences in writing skills between the pretest and posttest groups. The study also analyzed the effectiveness of the teaching methods used in both the experimental and control groups. To measure the impact of the Busuu application on students' writing performance and comprehension, the analytical results were correlated with the pre-established research questions.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to compare the writing test scores of both the experimental group (students who used the Busuu platform) and the control group (students who received traditional instruction). The results revealed a notable difference in the average scores between the two groups. It can be seen in Table 1:

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Experimental Class	20	55	100	82.50	12.618
Post-Test Experimental Class	20	54	100	81.75	12.165
Pre-Test Control Class	20	45	90	71.65	14.851
Post-Test Control Class	20	26	100	71.90	17.381
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to compare the writing test scores of both the experimental group (students who used the Busuu platform) and the control group (students who received traditional instruction). Table 1 shows the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation values of pre-test and post-test scores in both groups.

The experimental group had a pre-test mean of 82.50 and a post-test mean of 81.75, with a decrease in standard deviation from 12.618 to 12.165, indicating more consistent performance after the intervention. In contrast, the control group showed a pre-test mean of 71.65 and a post-test mean of 71.90, with an increase in standard deviation from 14.851 to 17.381, suggesting greater variability and less stable outcomes. This descriptive comparison suggests that although the experimental group experienced a slight decline in average score, their overall performance remained higher and more consistent than the control group. The reduction in standard deviation in the experimental group implies that students' writing performance became more uniform, potentially due to the structured and personalized learning provided by the Busuu platform. Meanwhile, the control group showed a slight improvement in average score but exhibited increased dispersion, which may indicate unequal individual progress when taught using conventional methods.

However, because descriptive statistics only provide a general overview, further analysis through inferential statistics, such as the independent sample t-test, is necessary to determine whether these observed differences are statistically significant and caused by the treatment.

Normality Test

The normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk method indicated that the data distribution of both the experimental and control groups met the assumption of normality. It can be seen in Table 2.

		Shapiro-Wilk		
	Class	**Statistic**	**Df**	**Sig.**
Students's Learning Outcomes	Pre-Test Experimental Class	.923	20	.111
	Post-Test Experimental Class	.929	20	.146
	Pre-Test Control Class	.919	20	.096
	Post-Test Control Class	.936	20	.204

Table 2. Tests of Normality

Based on the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test shown in Table 2, it can be concluded that the data from both the experimental and control groups are normally distributed. This is indicated by the significance values (Sig.) for all pre-test and post-test results, which are greater than the alpha level of 0.05. The experimental group obtained Sig. values of 0.111 for the pre-test and 0.146 for the post-test, while the control group had 0.096 in the pre-test and 0.204 in the post-test.

Since all values exceed 0.05, it means that the assumption of normality has been met. This validates the use of parametric statistical tests, particularly the independent sample t-test, in the next stage of analysis. The normal distribution of data enhances the reliability of the statistical conclusions and supports the consistency of the research findings regarding the effectiveness of the Busuu platform.

Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test was conducted using Levene's Test to examine whether the variance in writing scores between the experimental and control groups was equal. Table 3 shows that all significance values (Sig.) from the various statistical approaches—based on mean, median, adjusted median, and trimmed mean—are greater than 0.05. For example, the Levene's Test based on the mean produced a significance value of 0.263, indicating no significant difference in variance between the two groups.

		Levene Statistic	**df1**	**df2**	**Sig.**
Students's Learning Outcomes	Based on Mean	1.289	1	38	.263
	Based on Median	.888	1	38	.352
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.888	1	33.039	.353
	Based on trimmed mean	1.177	1	38	.285

Table 3 Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Since all Sig. values exceed the alpha level of 0.05, it can be concluded that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met. This means the variability of writing scores in both the experimental and control groups is statistically equal, satisfying a key assumption for using parametric tests such as the independent sample t-test.

Establishing variance homogeneity is essential to ensure the fairness and reliability of the comparative analysis between groups. With both normality and

homogeneity assumptions fulfilled, the data is considered suitable for inferential statistical analysis in the next phase of the study.

Independent Samples t-Test Analysis

The independent sample t-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in students' writing performance between the experimental group (using the Busuu platform) and the control group (using traditional instruction). It can be seen in Table 4:

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		**t-test for Equality of Means**						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Students's Learning Outcomes	Equal variances assumed	1.289	.263	2.076	38	.045	9.850	4.744	.247	19.453
	Equal variances not assumed			2.076	34.012	.045	9.850	4.744	.209	19.491

Table 4. Independent Samples Test

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in writing achievement between students in the experimental group, who used the Busuu platform, and those in the control group, who received traditional instruction. Before interpreting the t-test, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was used to assess the assumption of homogeneity. The significance value was 0.263, greater than the alpha level of 0.05, indicating that equal variances can be assumed.

Under the assumption of equal variances, the t-test for Equality of Means showed a t-value of 2.076, with 38 degrees of freedom and a p-value (2-tailed) of 0.045. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. This indicates that the students who used the Busuu platform outperformed those who were taught using conventional methods in the post-test writing assessment. The mean difference between the two groups was 9.850 points, with a standard error of 4.744. The 95% confidence interval of the difference ranges from 0.247 to 19.453, meaning the true difference in population means is likely to fall within this range and does not include zero, further confirming the significance of the results.

In conclusion, the findings support the effectiveness of the Busuu platform in improving students' writing performance. This result validates the hypothesis that integrating digital learning tools can lead to better academic outcomes in language learning, particularly in writing skills among junior high school students.

Discussion

Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant difference in English writing proficiency between the experimental and control groups, is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. The mean difference in writing scores is 9.850, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.247 to 19.453, indicating that the students who received treatment through the Busuu platform outperformed their peers who were taught using conventional methods. This statistical outcome confirms that the intervention had a meaningful effect, suggesting that Busuu provides not only a technological innovation but also pedagogical value in the context of foreign language writing instruction.

The results suggest that the Busuu platform is effective in boosting students' writing skills, primarily due to its learner-centered and interactive design. Features such as gamification, real-time corrective feedback, and task-based writing exercises are aligned with motivational strategies in educational technology, which are proven to support both engagement and performance. The findings echo Trimbur's (2013) assertion that writing proficiency, especially in an EFL setting, requires more than passive exposure to language, it demands structured practice, constant feedback, and active learner involvement. Busuu meets these criteria through an integrated approach that combines instructional content with engaging digital tools, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice in writing instruction.

Statistical evidence from the independent samples t-test ($p = 0.045 < 0.05$) further strengthens the claim of a significant difference between the groups. Although the experimental group's post-test mean (81.75) decreased slightly compared to its pre-test mean (82.50), it still surpassed the control group's post-test average (71.90) by a wide margin. More importantly, the reduction in the standard deviation within the experimental group indicates not a performance decline but an improvement in consistency, suggesting that the Busuu platform helped stabilize learning outcomes and reduce gaps among learners. This reflects a more equitable distribution of achievement, where students across varying proficiency levels benefited from the digital intervention.

These results are in line with the arguments made by Godwin-Jones (2011), who emphasized the effectiveness of mobile learning applications in promoting learner autonomy and interactivity. Busuu's adaptive feedback mechanisms, personalized learning paths, and smart review tools mirror key components of constructivist learning theory, which asserts that students learn best through meaningful, active engagement with content. Within this framework, Busuu acts not just as a tool for content delivery, but as a facilitator of deep cognitive processing and reflective practice key factors in the development of writing proficiency. The outcomes of this study therefore demonstrate that when digital tools are aligned with sound pedagogical theory, they can yield significant improvements in skill development.

Moreover, the use of Busuu in this study also reinforces the idea of technology-mediated instruction as a form of blended learning, where teacher presence complements digital input to maximize student learning. While concerns have been raised in prior studies such as those by Nushi and Jenabzadeh (2016) about the pedagogical soundness of mobile apps, the findings of this research show that when educators take an active role in guiding the use of technology, platforms like Busuu can function as effective extensions of classroom learning. In this sense, technology does not replace the teacher but enhances instructional quality and reach.

In conclusion, the findings of this study both statistical and pedagogical affirm the effectiveness of the Busuu platform in enhancing writing performance among junior

high school students. The platform's digital features, grounded in motivational theory and constructivist pedagogy, offer an engaging and effective alternative to traditional instruction. By aligning empirical results with theoretical foundations, the study reinforces the growing consensus that mobile-assisted language learning, when implemented thoughtfully, can be a transformative force in foreign language education. It is therefore recommended that educators and curriculum designers consider integrating platforms like Busuu not only to support writing instruction but also to enrich the broader spectrum of language skill development in 21st-century classrooms.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the Busuu platform in improving the writing skills of 1st grade junior high school students. Based on the analysis of descriptive data, normality, homogeneity, and independent sample t-test, it can be concluded that the use of Busuu has a significant effect ($p < \alpha = 0.05$) on enhancing students' writing abilities. Students who were taught using the Busuu platform showed greater improvements in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure than those who learned through conventional methods. The findings suggest that integrating digital platforms like Busuu into the English learning process can support better outcomes by promoting student engagement, motivation, and self-paced learning.

However, this study was limited by the brief duration of its implementation, which lasted only three days. This constrained the ability to observe long-term impacts and might have influenced the depth of students' skill development. A lengthier intervention period could have furnished more thorough insights into the progression and retention of writing competencies. This indicates that mobile-assisted language learning is not only a modern alternative but also a pedagogically valuable approach to developing writing skills among young learners. For future implementation, educators are recommended to consider incorporating Busuu as a supplementary tool in writing instruction. Further research may explore its long-term impact, effectiveness across different language skills, and adaptability in diverse classroom settings. Additionally, examining student perceptions and attitudes toward mobile learning can provide deeper insights into its overall educational value.

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