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UTILIZATION OF WHATSAPP GROUP AS A COMMUNICATION MEDIUM FOR ARABIC WRITING AND TEXT MESSAGE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Research on WhatsApp Group as a communication medium in the learning process and the application of foreign language communication has been widely discussed by researchers. However, research on WhatsApp Group utilization as a written communication medium to learn Arabic together is still rarely studied. Therefore, this study focuses on describing the WhatsApp Group feature used to learn Arabic together in the Arabic Education Department (Pendidikan Bahasa Arab/PBA) lecturer group and analyzing the messages contained in it. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach. This study revealed several findings: the PBA lecturer group used WhatsApp for written communication using Arabic to be a medium for continuous training. Some of the topics discussed through written communication were classified into three types: first, remarks, prayers, and invitations; second, information on important academic and non-academic matters; and third, discussion about everyday life. As for the results of the analysis of the text messages written by the PBA lecturer group, it was found that the text messages written in the WhatsApp Group in terms of choosing vocabulary and sentence structure were generally correct, and there were only a few words and sentence structures that were less precise. Theoretical implications are also described in the results of this study.

Keywords: WhatsApp Group, Arabic Writing, Text Message Analysis

Abstrak

Penelitian mengenai pemanfaatan *WhatsApp Group* sebagai media komunikasi dalam proses pembelajaran dan penerapan komunikasi berbahasa asing sudah banyak dibahas oleh para peneliti. Namun, penelitian tentang pemanfaatan *WhatsApp Group* sebagai media komunikasi tertulis menggunakan bahasa Arab dengan tujuan untuk belajar bahasa Arab bersama masih jarang dikaji oleh para peneliti. Maka dari itu, penelitian ini fokus untuk mendeskripsikan pemanfaatan fitur *WhatsApp Group* yang digunakan untuk belajar bahasa Arab bersama pada kelompok dosen PBA serta analisis pesan yang terkandung di dalamnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis deskriptif. Hasil penelitian ini mengemukakan beberapa temuan yakni bahwa kelompok dosen Prodi PBA

menggunakan *WhatsApp* untuk komunikasi tertulis menggunakan Bahasa Arab dengan tujuan sebagai media latihan secara kontinu. Beberapa topik yang dibahas melalui komunikasi tertulis tersebut diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga jenis yakni: *Pertama*, ucapan, doa dan undangan. *Kedua*, informasi hal-hal penting yang bersifat akademik maupun non akademik. *Ketiga*, diskusi tentang kehidupan sehari-hari. Adapun hasil analisis teks pesan yang diungkapkan oleh kelompok dosen PBA, ditemukan bahwa pesan teks yang ditulis di *WhatsApp Group* dari segi pemilihan kosa kata dan struktur kalimat pada umumnya tepat, dan hanya ada beberapa pemilihan kata dan struktur kalimat yang kurang tepat. Implikasi teoritis juga dijabarkan di dalam hasil penelitian ini.

Kata Kunci: Grup *WhatsApp*, *Maharah Al-Kitabah*, Analisis Pesan Text

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology is currently increasingly advanced. A wise alternative that the community can do in responding to it is to make the best use of the technology as a medium for improving the quality of knowledge, social and cultural life (Yoga, 2019). Advances in information and communication technology help people's lives and even become a necessity. Sources of information can be accessed quickly via the internet. Information and communication technology is integrated with people's daily lives and affects their communication patterns (Fahyuni, 2017).

Social media is one of the results of information and communication technology development, which impacts changing the way of communication from conventional to digital (Sari et al., n.d.). Social media is an online media that facilitates users to interact with others without distance and time limits and obtain and convey information quickly and economically (Cahyono, 2016).

Social media provides an alternative way for users to communicate virtually without meeting face-to-face (Xiao, 2018). Social media users can increase their existence widely by continuously updating all developments for public consumption through the status features, comments, and notes. (Watie, 2016).

Communication technology produces a variety of virtual communication features that can be applied to smartphones (Audina & Muassomah, 2020; Mubarak et al., 2020; Timbowo, 2016). One application that facilitates this is the *WhatsApp* application. *WhatsApp* simplifies interaction through the internet network used to establish social relationships and share information, whether in interpersonal communication, group communication, or organizations familiar with the term WhatsApp Group (Fauzi, 2017; Ilmiani et al., 2020). Through WhatsApp Group, users can convey any information and discuss it in the group. The positive and negative effects of WhatsApp Group, of course, cannot be separated from how users take advantage of the results of these technological developments (Sidiq, 2019).

In education, *WhatsApp* is used as a communication tool and as a medium that helps the learning process run smoothly. WhatsApp Group is also used to communicate and discuss among educators (Pustikayasa, 2019). Among students, WhatsApp Group is used in the learning process, such as exchanging information, disseminating information, discussing the subject materials, assignments, and

motivation to learn. Lecturers can also take advantage of this to share materials, information, and academic services (Afful & Akrong, 2020).

WhatsApp Group is also used in foreign language learning (Surani & Chaerudin, 2019). In Arabic learning, WhatsApp Group facilitates the users to practice spoken and written communication using Arabic. Both types of communication are essential elements by which other people can understand what is being conveyed (Sa'diyah, 2019b; Sa'diyah & Alfian, 2021; Sa'diyah, 2019a; Kusumawati, 2016).

The Arabic Education Department (*Pendidikan Bahasa Arab/PBA*) lecturer community at higher education in Palangka Raya utilizes *WhatsApp* as a written communication medium using Arabic. They express everything about their daily life using Arabic through the WhatsApp Group feature. They revealed that this effort was made to develop their Arabic writing skills. They argue that their Arabic language skills will decrease drastically or disappear entirely if this is not done. Therefore, this study describes how the PBA lecturer group uses the WhatsApp Group feature to communicate in Arabic.

Research on WhatsApp Group as a medium of communication in the learning process and the application of foreign language communication has been widely discussed by other researchers. Surani and Chaerudin report that lectures using WhatsApp Group can overcome the problem of time constraints. Students can send and receive assignments in audio, video, image, and chat files (Surani & Chaerudin, 2019). Sa'diyah reports that the WhatsApp Group feature can foster student confidence to bravely communicate verbally using Arabic (Sa'diyah, 2019b).

In addition to the statement above, Sa'diyah and Alfian describe that the WhatsApp Group feature could foster comfortable interactions among group members so that there is no awkward feeling to initiate or maintain a dialogue (Sa'diyah & Alfian, 2021). Sa'diyah, in her other research, also reports that the status update feature in *WhatsApp* can also be used to train Arabic writing skills continuously and interestingly while still being guided by the learning objectives (Sa'diyah, 2019a).

Furthermore, Awada reports that *WhatsApp* in learning is more effective in improving students' critical writing skills and learning motivation compared to regular learning (Awada, 2016). In addition, other features such as *WhatsApp* diary writing can also improve students' writing skills in foreign languages (Zainab et al., 2021).

From the studies above, it inference can be drawn that researchers have widely studied the use of WhatsApp Group in foreign language learning. However, research on WhatsApp Group as a written communication medium using Arabic to learn it together is still rarely studied. Moreover, the analysis of the messages contained in written Arabic communication is also still rarely discussed. That being the case, as previously explained, this article focuses on describing the WhatsApp Group feature to learn Arabic together in the PBA lecturer group and analyzing the messages contained in it.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative descriptive approach because it focused on describing the use of the WhatsApp Group feature to learn Arabic together in the PBA lecturer group and analyze its messages (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

The research participants were a group of eight PBA lecturers at a higher education located in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The eight lecturers were recruited based on their activeness in communicating in writing using Arabic in the WhatsApp Group.

The data was extracted through interview and documentation techniques. The interview was implemented to collect data concerning how to use WhatsApp Group in applying written Arabic communication. The documentation technique was used to analyze the messages contained in Arabic written communication through WhatsApp Group.

Text messages obtained from the documentation technique were analyzed using descriptive-argumentative, which was conducted by explaining the results of sentence analysis and providing arguments at each point by analyzing the aspects of vocabulary and sentence structure. As Makrufah said, what must be considered in writing Arabic is the conformity of writing rules, such as the correct use of Arabic vocabulary, *harakat*, expression, and paragraph to become effective, clear, and easily understood by readers (Makrufah, 2019). The validity of Arabic writing is also adjusted to the purpose of learning to write Arabic that is being able to write in Arabic by taking into account the prevailing linguistic elements. (Rathomi, 2020). The data collected were analyzed by conducting data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Utilization of WhatsApp Group as Arabic Writing Media

The PBA lecturers utilize WhatsApp Group for written communication in Arabic. They revealed that the purpose was to train their Arabic language skills, especially writing skills (*maharah kitabah*). On the other hand, it was done so that their Arabic language skills would not be lost or forgotten due to the lack of application of the language. WhatsApp Group also has a significant advantage; messages or writings in it will be there permanently if we do not delete them. It is undoubtedly helpful so that the messages can be re-read and corrected so the members can use the correct Arabic written language.

As Makrufah said, Arabic writing skills are positioned as a medium of written Arabic communication by expressing thoughts or ideas with specific meanings to the intended readers to comprehend. Writing is timeless so that it can be read at any time without being limited by space and time (Makrufah, 2019). On the other hand, the communication in Arabic writing can then be corrected according to the applicable rules in Arabic. It has implications for improving other Arabic language skills such as language elements, such as vocabulary (*mufradath*) and grammar (*tarkib*), and other skills such as listening (*istima'*), speaking (*kalam*), and reading (*qira'ah*).

On another occasion, PBA lecturers revealed that the text written and sent to WhatsApp Group was a natural and authentic message or, in other words, a message that is delivered according to reality on the field, not intentionally

created. The message is written in the form of a redaction that must be disclosed and answered. In writing messages, lecturers put Arabic writing with vocabulary and sentence structure skills they have mastered. If there is an unknown vocabulary or sentence structure, the lecturers can directly look it up in the offline and online dictionary application or *Google* via smartphones. It becomes a convenience for them, and it can improve the quality of their Arabic language skills.

The efforts made by the lecturers in searching for vocabulary and seeking information or knowledge about sentence structures that have not been understood are similar to those performed by previous researchers. Daeng et al. report that smartphones and the internet allow them to learn new things anywhere and anytime, enabling people to access information quickly (Daeng et al., 2017). The convenience of smartphones can motivate students to improve their foreign language skills because it is simple, practical, and economical (Barakati, n.d.).

WhatsApp is an effective communication medium in establishing social relationships and sharing information, whether it is interpersonal, groups, or organizations (Fauzi, 2017). The utilization of WhatsApp Group among PBA lecturers in written communication has also previously been carried out by educators (Shidiq & Warnilah, 2019), and it is also used as a medium of communication and discussion among employees in a company to help improve the effectiveness of their performance (Anjani et al., 2018). Practice and interaction in WhatsApp Group can improve foreign language skills virtually (Surani & Chaerudin, 2019), including Arabic (Arifin et al., 2021; Ilmiani et al., 2020; Yahya et al., 2021).

The written communication in Arabic conducted by the lecturers is about information and daily communication related to joint activities both on and off-campus. The topics of written communication are expressions of joy, sorrow, prayers, invitations, notifications, and discussions. Remarks and prayers frequently conveyed in WhatsApp Group are per what happened at that time, such as congratulations on achieving an academic degree, prayers for ease and smoothness in a matter, gratitude for assistance both in material and non-material, and apologies for forgetfulness and neglect.

Invitations or information often conveyed in WhatsApp Group are regular monthly meetings, periodic visits to orphanages notifications, exam schedules notification, and forwarded information regarding important matters. The frequent conversations in WhatsApp Group are the preparation of both academic and non-academic activities, the communication for the solution of a problem during an important event, such as technical problems on computers and the internet, the menus that must be provided, the study program's accreditation, the student achievements in academics, and other non-formal talks such as clothing, menu, advice on health, and world breaking news.

From the description, it can be inferred that WhatsApp is used to convey joy and sorrow, prayers and apologies written in Arabic. WhatsApp can also be applied for various invitations, information, and discussions of anything written in Arabic. As Setiawan said, WhatsApp is used to stream information or messages to help

solve human problems (activities) so that communication objectives are achieved (Setiawan, 2018).

WhatsApp is beneficial in improving the ability to write Arabic continuously. As Nasution said, information and communication technology media are made to facilitate people to explore and exchange information which is then used to develop their progress (Nasution, 2011).

As with the PBA lecturer group, other professional groups also use WhatsApp Group to support their profession, such as journalists worldwide. They regularly use WhatsApp in their professional practice, strengthen their commitment in their field and contribute to the good of society. This application generates story ideas and helps people find and communicate with other sources (McIntyre & Sobel, 2019). Consequently, WhatsApp is beneficial for helping professional groups facilitate work in communicating, writing skills, supporting, and motivating each other.

Text Message Analysis

As previously stated, written communication using Arabic carried out by the PBA lecturer group is classified into three types: *first*, remarks, prayers, and invitations; *second*, information on important academic and non-academic matters; and *third*, discussion about everyday life. The messages through WhatsApp Group were then analyzed by looking at the accuracy of the vocabulary selection and the accuracy of the sentence structure.

The choice of vocabulary and sentence structure in text messages written in Arabic was generally correct. The following is an example of a text message written in Arabic:

نحن نريد أن نزر دار اليتامى، ربما في شهر فبراير أو قبل رمضان.

The text message above belongs to the notification type. The author informed his friends that the next regular visit to the orphanage would be held before Ramadan. The vocabulary used was also appropriate. The sentence structure in this message was accurate, using the pattern of *jumlah ismiyah*, which begins with *isim dhamir* as *mubtada* and *khobar* and the form of *jumlah fi'liyah* which consists of *fi'il*, *fa'il*, and *maf'ul bih*. Another example of Arabic writing can be seen in the sentence below:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته. نرجو حضوركم وأسررتكم في اجتماعة شهرية لمحاضري قسم تعليم اللغة العربية يوم الأحد تاريخ ٩ يناير ٢٠٢١ في حديقة أستاذة ... شارع سوكارنو. شكرا على اهتمامكم وحضوركم والسلام عليكم.

The message above belongs to the invitation type. The invitation above contained requests for attendance from PBA lecturers and their respective families at regular monthly meetings at a predetermined time and place. The vocabulary used in the sentence was accurate. It was started with greetings, and then it conveyed the contents of the message. The sentence structure used was also appropriate. The first sentence used the *jumlah ismiyyah* pattern, and the second used the pattern of *jumlah fi'liyyah*, which consists of *fi'il*, *fa'il*, and *maf'ul bih*.

As it is seen from the accuracy of the vocabulary selection, some inappropriate vocabulary was found, such as the words *بو* and *دكتور* in *بو دكتور*. The

appropriate word should be ..دكتورة. This error is influenced by the languages commonly used by PBA lecturers in daily life, Indonesian or regional languages. It happened in the word كيف in the sentence كيف نسلم صدقتك إليه. The proper sentence should be لو سمحت سنسلم صدقتك إليها. Another error also occurred in writing إن شاء الله which should be written as إنشاء الله.

From the accuracy of the sentence structure, the messages written were generally correct. There were only a few errors that needed to be corrected, such as سهل الله في امتحانك. In the example, an object must exist (*maf'ul bih*) to complete the sentence. Therefore, the correct sentence is سهل الله لك الامتحان. The following example of an error was the sentence فمن يرد أن يعطيها ضعها أمام مكنتي. The appropriate sentence should be فمن يرد أن يعطيهم الملابس فيضعها أمام مكنتي. The last error that the researcher found was in the following sentence ربما لم ينخفض الألم فتحمله إلى الطبيب. The correct sentence should be إن لم ينخفض الألم فخذة إلى الطبيب.

From the results of this study, a conclusion can be drawn that, *first*, WhatsApp Group can help expedite work and communication outside of work. *Second*, by practicing Arabic writing continuously in WhatsApp Group, PBA lecturers' vocabulary will always be maintained and will not be easily forgotten. Their Arabic language skills will increase not only in writing but also in speaking. The more they use WhatsApp Group to communicate Arabic, the more they train and improve their abilities. Madge et al. say that interactive applications like *WhatsApp* can increase the homogeneity of learning success (Madge et al., 2019). Other findings also show that a combination of traditional approaches and technology can support work well (Haniah, 2014; Yavuz, 2016). The emergence of *WhatsApp* as a social media opens several opportunities for learners to change their educational journey for the better (Madge et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study describes how the PBA lecturer group utilizes the WhatsApp Group feature to communicate using Arabic and analyzes its messages. From the results of this study, it is found that the PBA lecturer group used *WhatsApp* for written communication using Arabic as a medium for continuous practice. Some of the topics discussed through written communication are classified into three types: *first*, remarks, prayers, and invitations; *second*, information on important academic and non-academic matters; and *third*, discussion about everyday life. As for the results of the analysis of the text messages expressed by the PBA lecturer group, it is found that the text messages written in WhatsApp Group were generally correct in terms of choosing vocabulary and sentence structure, and there are only a few words and sentence structures that are less precise. This research implies that WhatsApp Group can facilitate groups of foreign language lecturers to improve their foreign language skills through writing text messages.

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