Using Wattpad as a Media to Foster Better Literacy Skills: Extensive Reading and Creative Writing

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Article Info	Abstract
  *Corresponding author: komangwidiasmara@gmail.com	Numerous digital platforms have been invented to provide flexible and joyful learning process. For instance, online learning platforms enable students to read and write related to their passion. In providing digital literacy for learning, one of the most valuable platforms can be used is Wattpad, an online reading and writing platform with various genres. Wattpad offers free features to have extensive reading and creative writing. This platform is an effective media to foster students' reading interest and emerge students to express creativities in writing. This study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of digital platform Wattpad as a learning media to foster literacy skills such as reading and writing. The research used descriptive qualitative method and the data were collected by library research which reviewed related studies about Wattpad. Based on several studies reviewed, it was found that there is a positive feedback of using Wattpad as a learning media to improve literature skills. Those empirical studies revealed that by using Wattpad students can improve their learning habits in terms of reading and writing. Therefore, Wattpad is an alternative media to provide an enjoyable learning experience which has purposes for any aspects such as for career, education, learning, creativity and entertainment.

INTRODUCTION

English has been a global language since few centuries ago. Application of language acquisition mostly uses English as the main language in most countries. Thus, English has been learned and acquired globally since it becomes the international language around the world. In learning English, it cannot get rid of requirements of skills to be mastered. According to Khan (2008), there are four main skills which should be mastered by the learners in learning English. Those are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Those skills are categorized into receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (speaking and writing). Both skills are very important and crucial in learning English because they are related each other. By focusing more on productive skills first, learners will automatically learn the receptive skills. For example, by producing the language, the learners will create a conversation or a text, whereas then the learners produce a text or sentence, they will automatically learn to read from another speaker. Therefore, those skills are strong requirements in learning and acquiring English purposively.

In this 21st century learning, those skills are needed to develop and improve literacy skills, for example in reading and writing skills. Most students spend more time in digital literacy for any purposes such as for education, pleasure, and communication in which it will affect their reading and writing skills (Ayyildiz et al., 2021). The students tend to have reading and writing activity through usage of technologies which are more interesting and joyful for them. From those activities, school will play fewer roles as a major in developing literacy skill because the students mostly have activities or interactions on digital media (Lotocki, 2018). Hence, it is important to watch how people use digital literacy in terms of reading in writing in order to keep directing them into development of literacy skills. Reading and writing skills affect much on literacy skills and they need to be considered as important points in literacy skills.

Reading is a receptive skill. According to Hasan & Khan (2021), many reasons come from students to have reading activity in which they can read texts for careers, educations, and study purposes or simply for entertainment. Reading can be defined as one of the most crucial skills in educational setting in which it takes ability and thinking capability to understand the content of the text (Permatasari et al., 2020a). Thus, reading provides students more opportunities to acquire a language in which the more they read, the more they can get understandings and also it gives positive impact on other language components mastery such as vocabulary, spelling, and writing. However, currently students tend to have reading activity on digital media from internet which addicts them to get involved in extensive reading. Extensive reading is a reading activity which is mostly done away or outside classroom where students can read novel, web pages, newspaper, magazines and other reference materials (Khan, 2008). Therefore, this activity requires students to have more pleasures and joys of reading in which they can freely choose what they like to read based on their personal interests.

Afterwards, in developing literacy skills, writing also should be considered as important point. Writing is a complex skill in English. The language skills in English bring different portion of problems for students. According to Sa'diyah et al. (2021), mostly the students lose in learning speaking and writing. Each skill can also bring different problems depends on learners' learning abilities. Thus, writing is still becoming a problem in acquiring language skills in English. Most students perceive they cannot and do not want to write because they have lack of confidence and perceive that writing is a boring activity (Lavasani & Khandan, 2011). Therefore, teacher should be able to engage them with enjoyable activities which can attract their interest to write. Meanwhile, in this current era, many tools and media can be used to solve this problem such as by using digital literacy for writing in which the students can freely express their ideas and creativities through written forms.

In order to improve literacy skills such as reading and writing, the teacher should be able to provide and facilitate students with meaningful and joyful learning. In encouraging students to concentrate and participate in the learning process, the teacher needs to be creative and innovative in providing the materials (Sugiarti, 2020). Being innovative means having new ideas and solutions in some particular ways by using the available tools or stuffs. According to Sánchez-Cruzado et al. (2021), innovation is an attempt of implementing new or different ideas to bring out educational improvement by doing something which is perceived. Thus, in language teaching the teacher should be able to construct ideas and solutions for creating engagement with the students in the learning process.

Innovation gives strong impact to the improvement of teaching learning process. By having innovation, the teacher can create engagement in the class where the students can get good atmosphere and interesting process of learning. According to Sopa et al. (2020), innovation affects much for internal process of learning in which innovation can improve students' performance in learning.

Besides, innovation can improve teacher's performance as well. Based on Islam et al. (2019), a good school can be indicated from the teacher's innovation which is more productive and competitive in the global education. Therefore, it is very essential for the teacher to provide best literacy learning which can engage and attract students to have more reading and writing activity.

In providing digital literacy for students learning, there are a lot of learning platforms or application provided on the internet such as Google Books, Glose, Tumblr, Goodreads, Wattpad, and many more. According to F. Rahman & Amir (2019), online learning platforms and application can enable students to read extensively and write creatively related to their passion and favorite subjects. Those platforms are becoming popular currently and mostly used by people every day in having their reading activity and expressing ideas through writing. One of the mostly used is Wattpad, in which it has claimed to have more than 70 million users or audiences around the world in 2019 (Permatasari et al., 2020b). This platform offers the users to the features freely to have extensive reading and creative writing. Therefore, this platform can be used as alternative and effective media to foster students' interest in reading extensively and emerge students to express creativities in writing in any genres.

In recent days, it was found that students tend to have low motivation in reading especially in reading such long passages. They still have reading activity in particular conventional ways in which they cannot be motivated in learning. Thus, teachers need to have innovative strategies and media to foster students' motivation in learning, especially in reading activity. Moreover, lack of media prevents students to express their creative thoughts and ideas in writing. Students are required to have media which can express their writing freely based on their passion. Therefore, by applying technologies such as digital literacy media Wattpad, it is expected that it can emerge students' desire to read extensively and affect students' creativity in writing. From the previous result of the studies above, this research is aimed to analyse the effectiveness of using Wattpad as a learning media to foster literacy skills such as extensive reading and creative writing.

METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative research design or it can be categorized into non-experimental study in which the research used qualitative methods to describe what it is. According to Bogdan & Biklen in Tuckman (2012:395), a qualitative research is concerned with natural setting in the data source in which the researcher is the key data-collection instrument. This kind of study attempts to commonly describe and analyze a phenomenon.

The study focused on discussing the application of Wattpad as an online platform to emerge interest in reading extensively as well as writing creatively. The secondary data were gained through library research by collecting and reviewing related studies about Wattpad in reading and writing. The data obtained were in form of papers, scientific articles, and journals by interpreting and transcribing the result of the study.

The process of data analysis used several procedures to analyze the data; (1) collecting the papers, journals or articles, (2) reviewing the result of related studies about Wattpad, (3) analysing the positive effect of Wattpad in the related studies, and (4) describing the effectiveness of using Wattpad for reading and writing.

RESULT

Recently, technologies have advanced abroad and around the world. Those also have affected the development of education especially in teaching and learning process. According to Bal (2018),

ministry of education has proposed technological investment which applies out-of-school digital environment to strengthen reading and writing habits which has become new trends in this current era of technologies. The technology integration can give positive impact for the learning progress in which it can be combined with effective strategy and method of learning. Thus, the teacher plays important role in providing the best strategy by integrating it with technology. Permatasari et al. (2020a) stated that the advanced technology in recent years has given students more opportunities in having many activities and interaction online, including extensive reading and writing outside the classroom.

Wattpad was established by two Canadian engineers and co-workers Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen in 2006. Since its development, this online platform is a place for community of writers and readers to aspire and experience masterpieces from authors around the world (Permatasari et al., 2020b). Wattpad is a learning platform focuses on providing an attractive design of reading and writing including stories in various genres and interests (Ayyildiz et al., 2021). Wattpad encourages writers to share stories, attracts readers to read and gets feedback from others. The activity aims to provide students fun and joyful reading based on their interests and provide them to share their ideas, opinions, experience, and creativities by writing down and posting it on Wattpad.

This activity is design to provide students to have better reading comprehension and better creative writing. Students can use this application to read and write stories based on their personal interests in which they can give comments and get feedback from others (Graham, 2017). This activity is believed to give best opportunities for students to share their opinions, feelings, creativities and ideas through publishing their literary works. Thus, Wattpad itself can help students in learning literary and in improving their literacy skills (I. Rahman et al., 2019). Wadpatt provides texts or stories in different contexts and wide range of genres such as action, fiction, horror, fantasy, humor, history, adventure, etc. (Anggitasari et al., 2020).

Based on Bal (2018), Wattpad users have increased continuously because it offers a lot of chances to enrich reading and writing experience. The students can have better reading habits by using it because the topics provided are various and interesting. Moreover, Permatasari et al. (2020a) added that this platform can get students to have extensive reading activities outside the classroom independently. The students also can freely publish their writing and share opinions to other stories in order to gain more insight in writing to improve creative writing skill. Therefore, by using this learning platform hopefully can avoid students' boredom in reading and make them more active in reading and writing activity.

Wattpad provides some simple features which are easy to be used. It offers the users to have chances not only to read, but also to write and publish (Anggitasari et al., 2020). In integrating teaching and learning process with Wattpad, there are some procedures need to be considered. First, students have to access Wattpad on google or download it on apple store, play store or google store by

their smartphones. Second step, they need to be signed up to new account in which they can use their personal email or Facebook account. After they are signed in, Wattpad is ready to be used.

In the learning process, teacher needs to choose appropriate materials which can be integrated with Wattpad. For example, the material which contains texts including reading or writing activity. There the teacher can involve the students into some activities on Wattpad where they can explore any kinds of texts and read some related topics. Moreover, the teacher can bring the students into writing activity provided on the Wattpad features. There the students can write down their ideas and creativities and then publish it. In addition, the students are able to give feedback and comment on other authors, in which they learn to give and get feedback each other to improve their writing. Hence, students will be more engaged and involved on reading and writing process in which it is expected to become their habits.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, Wattpad is intended to give a strong impact on students' desire to utilize digital literacy for reading and writing. Digital literacy is confirmed as a place for them to share their thoughts and emotions by reading and writing. By using Wattpad, the students can involve themselves in reading process in extensive way and this learning platform can give crucial contributions on their reading habits. The students are capable to explore their passions and interests on various genre provided by Wattpad. This feature could attract the students to have more time in reading for particular purposes such as learning and entertainment. Furthermore, Wattpad provides a space for those who are excited to share and stick their thoughts and feelings by writing passages such as true stories or fiction stories. The students can explore their writing skill by sharing their own stories in the writing feature provided in this platform. Therefore, the findings found that Wattpad can be defined as a proper media to increase students' literacy skill especially in reading and writing.

In supporting Wattpad as an effective media to foster literacy skills in reading and writing, there are several studies revealed positive outcomes toward the usage of Wattpad as a digital literacy media. First study comes from Bal (2018) which determined in and out-school reading writing experience by using Wattpad. The result showed Wattpad made participants can express themselves comfortably and they shared positive experience on their willingness, diversity, meaningfulness and entertainment though using Wattpad. Second study conducted by Permatasari et al. (2020a) exploring students' perceptions toward extensive reading on Wattpad platform and its benefits on English skills. The result showed that students have positive perceptions toward extensive reading by using Wattpad and they perceived to have better writing skills and vocabulary mastery.

As the study conducted by Rahman & Iwan (2019), Wattpad helps students to involve in literacy works to gain meaningful learning process with its moral and social values. He found that this learning platform is very flexible to maximize the learning process in any situation with the language features such as vocabularies, phrases, sentences as well as dialogues which enable the students to

experience more. Thus, the students can have a new atmosphere of writing by using Wattpad as their media to write. They can have writing activities everywhere and anytime without considering writing tools and stationaries. They can access it freely through their smart phones and utilize the features to have better writing experience. In line with Adiningtyas (2020), Wattpad can give an effective contribution on students' writing skills. It showed that this platform can give joyful writing experience where the students can freely express their feelings and thoughts while writing recount text.

On the other hand, Saputri et al. (2022) investigated students' reading interest by using Wattpad and it was found that Wattpad is an effective media to emerge students' reading interest. This media can be used as an alternative way to accompany students in increasing their reading habits. Hence, Wattpad can influence students to be more active in reading. Besides, Sukriyadi (2020) on his study found that Wattpad is an effective media as it is used in short stories. This literacy media can be used to facilitate students to have better reading skill such as reading short stories. Wattpad provides various choices of genre based on students' interest on their short stories. The result proved that Wattpad can support students improving short story skill and it was classified with good values. In line with this, Lestari & Hasanudin (2019) also found out students' perspectives of using Wattpad in doing their reading was positive. The students assumed Wattpad can allow them express comfortably and it can share positive experiences as well. It was found that, this learning platform is a valuable social media which can give motivation in reading.

Next study revealed by Başoğul (2021) which discovered the same perceptions toward Wattpad as an online literacy community. It was found that students enjoy spending more time on Wattpad to read freely. They perceived this platform has developed reading and writing habits in which they can explore various genres based on their interest. Last review comes from Anggitasari et al. (2020) who investigated EFL college students' experiences in enjoying short stories on Wattpad. The study found that there is positive feedback of using Wattpad as a learning media to improve literature skills. Those empirical studies revealed that by using Wattpad students can improve their learning habits in terms of motivation in learning and reading activities. In addition, Wattpad is also able to engage students in learning through digital literacy. For instance, the students are able to give comments and suggestions on each passage and story. They can express their opinions through comment sections as well as having feedbacks from others on their works. Therefore, the students can utilize Wattpad as an effective learning media to foster better literacy skill such as extensive reading and creative writing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Wattpad is a media platform which can be defined as a digital literacy to involve the users in reading and writing activities. This learning platform has several purposes to any aspects such as for career, education, learning, creativity and entertainment. It is supported by some features that provide the users to use it purposively. By using Wattpad, as the significances of the

previous study, hopefully it can foster reading and writing activity in which the users can improve their extensive reading skill and creative writing skill. Nevertheless, several things need to be anticipated in using Wattpad especially for educational purposes. First, teacher should pay attention on selecting topics, in which they should be provided on the Wattpad. Second, teacher needs to motivate the students to get involved more in using Wattpad as an attractive reading and writing media. Third, students can freely access topics they personally interest in; however, they should have more reading in English instead of in their natives. Last but not least, Wattpad can be used both as a learning media or entertainment, so teacher should strict on the purpose more.

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