

Microblogging with Padlet: Students' New Writing Experience on A2–B1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

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Abstract—This research work aims to answer the question, compared to conventional media, whether the use of Padlet as a microblogging platform can improve students' German writing skills for A2 - B1 level CEFR standard. Students in class A wrote with a conventional paper sheet. Meanwhile, students in class B wrote an essay writing assignment through the Padlet platform. The study took place in Malang, Indonesia and lasted for one semester. In summary, 45 students participated. The pre-test data indicated that there is no difference in the results of the pre-test in the control class and experiment class. The post-test scores were obtained from two writing assessments in both classes. The test results indicated the data value sig 0.326 in the ANOVA table, which means that there are no differences in the post-test results in the two classes. Thus, it was concluded that the use of Padlet in microblogging activities in writing did not affect the results of student writing scores. Nevertheless, the use of Padlet has not any disadvantages, whereas students get additional digital skills and respond additionally positively to the use of Padlet.

Keywords—Microblogging, learning media, German writing skills A2 – B1, CEFR

1 Introduction

German as a foreign language is at least offered at 13 universities in Indonesia, and it aims to provide foreign language skills other than English, including to students of Universitas Negeri Malang (Malang State University). German skills and proficiencies of third-semester students of the 2017 batch are illustrated in the results of the score in course *Deutsch 3*, which was obtained in the last semester of the 2018/2019 academic year. In this semester, the students are at level A2-B1 CEFR in

German skills. The average value for the German skills was 68.9. The score for writing skills in the midterm exam obtained an average class score of 72.4, while the score of the writing skills in the final semester exam obtained an average class value of 72.8. It can be assumed that students still encounter difficulties in writing skills.

As known, the German skills and proficiencies are based on the level of difficulty. The level of mastery of German is explained in the CEFR, in German is referred to as *Gemeinsamer Europäische Referenzrahmen* (GER), which is a guideline for the European language standards that applies internationally. There are six levels of mastery of the *Deutsch*, namely A1 and A2 (elementary language usage), B1 and B2 (independent language usage), as well as C1 and C2 (competent language usage). Each of these levels is described in *Kannbeschreibung* (Can-description), both receptive and productive skills and proficiencies [1].

Language learning, especially foreign languages, is a complex process with various problems. Existing constraints and problems are often influenced by many factors that are closely related to foreign language learning, including external and internal factors [2]. Learning external factors are, for example, the availability of teaching media in the form of books and media learning, learning techniques, and other external factors. While, the internal factors are, for example, the talent and interest, motivation, and other internal factors [3].

As part of four language skills, writing skills need to be taken into account to a greater extent, because it is based on the fact, that writing skill is the most challenging language skill and the most recent form of language skill mastered by language learners [4]. Thus, learners need to use specific techniques and must be assisted by certain media to develop their writing skills. Based on the explanation above, this research study aims to answer the question, whether the use of a microblogging platform can improve students' German writing skills. Furthermore, students need not only learn the language itself but also need skills in using several tools and applications for writing because media usage plays a significant role in the learning process, and it can better explain what verbal communication cannot explain. The learning experience might become more interesting, and thus awakens the motivation of the learners. Learning media usage must be used wisely, therefore the learning goals can be achieved easier. For example, the theory of Mayer stated, that the learning effect is higher when the learners are presented with pictures to the text, rather than just text alone [5].

In general, computers are used in learning, both inside and outside the classroom. Li's research result shows that CAT (computer-aided technology) verifies the beneficial role in writing and also provides practical advice for writing improvements [6]. Related to the use of media in learning, currently, blogs are used as a medium for writing. As a result, students enhance their efficiency in writing and become more involved in the online class [7]. Blogs in the scope and features of smaller facilities are known as microblogging, and it is one of the recent technology in the Web 2.0 era [8]. Research conducted by Ebner et al. exposes that microblogging media can be regarded as a recent form of communication that can informally support learning outside the classroom [8], enhance critical thinking skills, [9], as well as assessment skills [10].

In this study, the use of microblogging was explicitly intended for students to write German essays. Bicen and Cavus stated, that microblogging could be used in the education sector as it is consistent with students' features and trends in social media interaction [11]. Interaction and communication are seen as significant components of the teaching process, and these opportunities can be realized by microblogging [12]. Results from Jusoh's study show that both learners and instructors are more likely to use social media than learning management systems [13].

Meanwhile, the most microblogging media used by research participants in Bicen and Cavus research was Twitter [11], it was used as a means of communication and assessment of learning outcomes, for example, teachers/lecturers send information about lectures, results of assignment assessments, and peer review among students [14]. However, this media still has shortcomings, including input data security, layout display, and limited data space. In addition, several aspects of social media and opened data are stated as the main disadvantage of using social media in education [15].

Lestari and Kurniawan compared Padlet with several other online media. After knowing the characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of each social media, Padlet was used for their research [16]. Based on these considerations, in this study, platform Padlet was used to provide personal space in writing, as well as the security of the personal data of the authors. Padlet is an application that allows users to collaborate with text, photos, videos, or other content. Padlet functions like an online sheet of paper or bulletin board where users can individually and collaboratively place content on a Web page [10], [17]. Concisely, Padlet helps the lecturer to give the task for the students, give comments, and also the whole class can see the result of each college students' work [18] and as well as opportunities for peer learning and self-assessment since students have immediate access to a broad spectrum of responses from classmates rather than a few responses from the vocal ones [19].

The word *microblog* is derived from *micro* and *blog*. The word *micro* means small, and the word *blog* (web-blog) means an online journal. Thus, the term microblog refers to the meaning of online journals on a small scale. In short, microblog is understood as a form of a blog that allows users to write a short text and publish it, either to be read by the public in general or by a limited group chosen by the author. The benefits of microblogging consist primarily in the possibility of giving immediate feedback, and in the recording of writing processes. Currently, the biggest microblog media is Twitter and is commonly used as a means of communicating. The use of microblog in *Deutsch* writing skills is important because students are always motivated to write and send texts, ask questions, comment on blogs [20]. Besides, online learning allows students to focus and learn and have flexibility with much preparation time for discussion [21].

1.1 Problem of research

Through this microblogging writing activity, it is expected that students' skills and abilities in essay writing on *Deutsch* can be improved. The issue of this study can be explained as follows based on the above definition: how is the outcome of implement-

ing the Padlet microblogging platform as a teaching model for German writing skill at level A2 - B1 CEFR Standard opposed to traditional media.

1.2 Research focus

Based on the introduction above, the formulated hypothesis is as follows:

Using Padlet as a microblogging platform can hold or even improve writing skills for the A2-B1 Standard CEFR/GER level. To answer the hypothesis as mentioned earlier, four essential questions are formulated as follows:

- Do the two classes, according to the pre-test, acquire the same level?
- Did one of the two classes, according to the post-test, acquire a higher level?
- Is there a correlation between the use of Padlet and the acquisition of the score?
- Did the number of words in the essay correlate with the acquisition of values?

2 Methodology of Research

To answer the research question above, the subject of the research study was determined, namely students who acquired in the A2 - B1 CEFR for *Deutsch*. Class A took a role as the control class consisted of 23 female and 3 male students. Meanwhile, class B took a role as the experimental class consisted of 16 female and 3 male students. The respondents are within the range of 19-22 years. This research was conducted in one semester from January to July 2019. Then, the pre-test and post-test were used in both classes. Writing assignments given to students in the first half of the semester are used as pre-test scores while writing assignments in the last half of the semester are used as post-tests. The purpose of this class division was to compare the learning outcomes between the two classes. The steps used to obtain data in this study are as seen in table 1:

Table 1. Assessment given to the two groups.

Steps	Control Class	Experimental Class
Content Discussion	Writing task for students	Writing task for students
Individual Assignment	Conventionally writing task through paper-based	Writing task through online platform Padlet, uploading: text, image, and video
		Commenting and answering questions in the online platform
	Submitting the writing to the lecturer	
Individual Assessment	yes	yes
Post-test	yes	yes
Questionnaire	no	yes

There is no special treatment in the experimental class, but an assessment for the use of Padlet as a microblogging platform. The control class did paper-based writing assignments, while the experimental class did online web-based writing assignments

through the Padlet microblogging platform. According to the two distribution activities above, some important points can be explained as follows:

- The data obtained was in the form of a narrative essay written in *Deutsch* by the students
- The narrative essays were scored by using a 10-100 scale. The assessment of essays considering:
 - a) The ability of students to develop ideas based on instructions (*Leitpunkte*),
 - b) Student's ability to communicate writing ideas,
 - c) Grammatical and writing structure accuracy,
 - d) Readability of text.
- After the score was given, the word numbers in the essay were counted.
- It is assumed, that student writing motivation is reflected in the number of words written in essays. The more text written means, the more motivated someone is in writing.

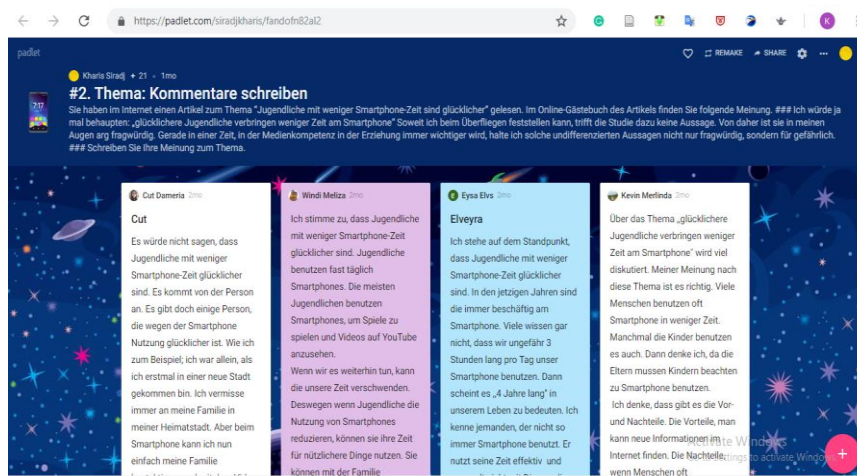


Fig. 1. Example of a writing task given to students.

2.1 Sample of research

Before giving an assessment, three pre-tests were given to two classes. The pre-test was given in the form of an essay writing assignment with the topics as seen in table 2:

Table 2. Themes to pre-tests

Class	Theme to pre-test 1	Theme to pre-test 2	Theme to pre-test 3
A	Handy im studentischen Leben	Fernsehsendung am Wochenende	Beschreibung des Deutschinstituts
B	Familienfeste	Alltagsleben	persönlicher Brief

Each writing assignment is equipped with *Leitpunkte* as an aid to the outline. Although they have different themes, based on the results of the one-sample *t*-test, it is known that the levels of difficulty on the themes in both classes are the same. This is done to answer the research question (1) according to the pre-test, do the two classes acquire the same level? To answer this question, one sample test is required. The test results show the following data, that points out a sig. value (2-tailed) = 0,000 (less than 0.05), thus there was no difference in the average of the three pre-tests in the control class. The data point out a sig. value (2-tailed) = 0,000 (less than 0.05), thus there was no difference in the mean of the pre-test in the experimental class.

Furthermore, the pre-test data from both classes showed that the value of sig 0.000 (<0.05) means that the data is normally distributed. Furthermore, the pre-test data from the two classes showed that the value of sig 0.000 (<0.05) which means that the data was homogenous, and the sig value of 0.452 in the ANOVA table (> 0.05) means that there were no differences in the pre-test results in the control class and experiment. From the three pre-tests conducted by students in both classes, it can be concluded that students in both classes are at the same level of writing ability.

3 Results of Research

After performing the pre-test, students in both classes were given a writing assignment as a post-test. Students in class A wrote with a conventional paper sheet. Meanwhile, students in class B wrote an essay writing assignment using *Deutsch* through the Padlet platform. In addition, these students can respond to essays written by other students in the form of comments, questions, answers, and other non-linguistic responses.

Table 3. Themes to the post-tests

Class	Theme to post-test 1	Theme to post-test 2
A	Liebe aus dem ersten Blick	Bildergeschichte
B	Kommentare schreiben	Unterhaltung am Wochenende

Similar to the pre-test, each writing assignment is equipped with *Leitpunkte* as an aid to the outline. Although they have different themes, based on the results of the one-sample *t*-test, it is known that the levels of the two classes are the same.

3.1 Data analysis

To investigate if there is a correlation between the use of Padlet and the acquisition of score, a homogeneity test, and ANOVA test were carried out, as shown in table 4.

Table 4. ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	42.690	1	42.690	.986	.326
Within Groups	1819.099	42	43.312		
Total	1861.790	43			

The results indicate that the sig 0.326 presented in the ANOVA table was > 0.05 ; it means that there are no differences in the post-test results in the experimental class and the control class. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of the Padlet platform on microblogging activities for *Deutsch* writing skills does not affect the results of student writing scores, whether positively nor negatively.

Furthermore, to answer question number (4), an analysis of the correlation test using Pearson Correlation was conducted, as shown in table 5:

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Results: post-test results and number of words in essays.

Post-tests	Class A	Remarks	Conclusion
1	0.372	Weak and positive	No significant correlation
2	0.015	Weak and positive	No significant correlation
	Class B		
1	0.535	Strong and positive	Significant correlation
2	0.241	Weak and positive	No significant correlation

The correlation test results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the acquisition of the first post-test score with the number of words in the essay, contradictory, there is no relationship to the second post-test test. It proves that microblogging with Padlet increases student's motivation in writing more extended essays.

Related to the previous experience with a blog, all respondents participated to fill out a questionnaire, as shown in table 6:

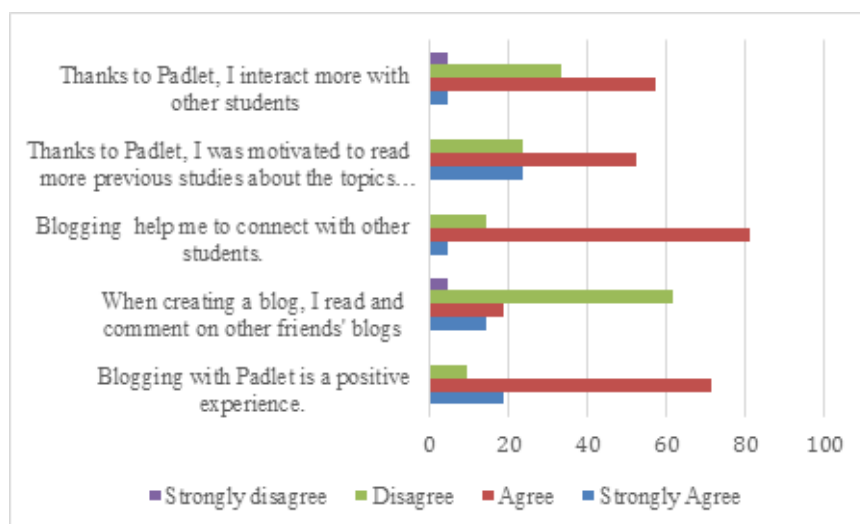


Fig. 2. Previous blog experience (number in percent)

Figure 2 shows, that most students have new experiences in writing blogs with Padlet. Interestingly, most students recognized that they are connected to other students, but only a few are motivated to write comments, even though this is a new experience.

4 Discussion

Although there is no influence on the writing skill of *Deutsch*, the use of Padlet in learning has at least some strengths and weaknesses. The following is the student's positive response to Padlet:

- Motivate students to write, and it offers new experiences.
- Enable a more relaxed discussion opportunity for introverted people, since it does not have to be face to face.
- Enable to read, and comment on the writing of other students, and make it possible to revise it.
- Enable to insert images, videos, and audio.
- Besides, Padlet is easy to apply, interactive, and more communicative [18].

Similar to the result conducted by He, the majority of college learners could improve learners' English writing learning autonomy with Pigaiwang [22], an application similar to Padlet. Another research result conducted by Garcia et.all pointed that using blogs for students' learning outcomes was better, but students recognized that the benefits of blogs are influenced by students' attitudes towards the use of technology in teaching and learning activities, and previous experiences with blogs [23].

This study reinforces the results of Deni and Zainal's research, which concluded that even though a small number of students had some negative perceptions of Padlet, most of the students perceived Padlet use very positively [24]. Although it has many advantages, the use of blogs in writing skills must consider the potential confounding factors that may occur. The use of the internet for learning must take into account the supporting factors because technology is fickle and unpredictable. Internet access comes and goes, and sites go down for maintenance without warning [19].

Meanwhile, some students provided negative feedback on the use of Padlet because:

- The complicated process of editing the posted writing task.
- Padlet requires an internet connection while accessing.

The results of the questionnaire showed that many students still objected to assignments via the internet. As known, internet access in Indonesia is still relatively expensive. In addition, to be able to run the features appropriately, the Padlet platform requires compatible smartphone devices with adequate specifications. Thus, the use of an old smartphone device can result in a slow-loading menu process, and this can demotivate students to use Padlet as a media of writing assignments. For students, the use of Padlet as a new medium in writing skills in German essays is indeed a new experience, but its use must consider supporting factors. Garcia's research results have shown the importance of understanding student expectations while teaching blogs and the need to carefully plan and monitor the use of blogs [23].

This study reinforces the results of Deni & Zainal's research, which concluded that most students who were only actively engaged in Padlet activities on case-study-related tasks. The positive perception of Padlet as a learning tool does not influence students' frequency of use [24], but previous experience working with blogs can influence the successful use of Padlet in writing skills. These findings can be used as a framework to design a writing learning by using Padlet as a blog.

5 Conclusion

Based on the results of this scientific study, we can state the following:

- The use of microblogging based on the Padlet platform has no disadvantages for students in the academic or non-academic field. Students who used Padlet did at least as well as their colleagues.
- Compared to the control class, the score of the experimental class did not show any better results, but the writing skills could be improved at the beginning of the activities. The students gained new writing experience and were highly motivated to complete their tasks.
- During the semester, the experimental group encountered various technical difficulties, including the availability of internet access and the ability of smartphones to access individual Padlet.

- Besides, there have been many positive reactions regarding the use of Padlet for microblogging. Here it could be pointed out that students welcome the use of new media in teaching.
- The study also showed that using Padlet as a learning medium requires better pedagogical strategies to achieve higher learning outcomes, e.g., more intensive writing support, comments and improvement suggestions from lecturers to motivate students to write.

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