

Students' Perception on The Use of WhatsApp for Learning Writing During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study

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Abstrak: Writing skill is a complex skill that cannot be learned independently. Although students learn from home, they need a comprehensive understanding of theories and practical guidance from the teacher. Therefore, teachers use many media and applications that can support this online learning with various considerations. This research is conducted to find out the nine-grade students' SMPN 04 Pare perception of the use of WhatsApp groups for learning writing. This research used a case study to identify students' perceptions in the IX C class of SMPN 4 Pare. There were 31 students responded to the questionnaire. In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics were used. The writer used mean as the measurement to determine the percentage of students' perception. The result shows that students have positive responses to the use of WhatsApp in learning writing. The students show strong interest in the usage of WhatsApp for learning writing platform and the learning activities that were done through WhatsApp.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing skill plays an important part in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning since such skill is required to enhance students' academic achievement (Aliyu, 2020). This skill is a complex skill that cannot be learned independently. Mostly, the students need a comprehensive understanding of theories of writing and practical guidance from the teacher during their writing practice. They need direction, feedback in order to improve their writing. The feedback they get can make them aware of mistakes made in writing (F. Handayani & Handayani, 2020; Faroha et al., 2016).

The outbreak of COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on nearly everyone, everything, and many sectors. With this "new normal" in these exceptional times, it's significantly changed how we used to live, learn, and work. For many people, the idea of learning and working from home is becoming increasingly acceptance (Chiodini, 2020). Online learning is a learning activity that requires an internet network with connectivity, accessibility, flexibility, and the ability to generate various types of learning interactions (Firman & Rahayu, 2020). Since the emergence of positive COVID-19 patient cases in Indonesia, the government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, has implemented a policy of learning and working from home since mid-March 2020 (Bernadetha, 2020). Thus, the government is also working on subsidized internet to facilitate distance learning conducted via gadgets such as PC or cellular phone (Sajida & Ranjani, 2020).

Various high-end devices, such as a computer, laptops, and smartphones, play an important role in our lives, and we have grown accustomed to them. This is one of the benefits that can be used and employed in the educational process. As the

curriculum expands, devices can be used as a tool to conduct interactive activities, such as online tutorials and quizzes (Arnold-Garza, 2014). The application of portable technology has been widely demanded by the majority of modern learners who are often forced to study anywhere and anytime (Evans, 2008). The use of ICT as teaching media in EFL classroom is able to solve the problem and help teachers design new techniques in teaching; it also encourages student willingness to learn English and implement enjoyable learning activities (Fithri Al-Munawwarah, 2014). Study that examines the use of ICT for learning conducted by Maharani et al. (2020) researched students' perceptions of the flipped classroom, which is a combination of e-learning and face-to-face instructional principles by integrating activities, resources, support, and assessment. Supported by the students' perception of the implementation of the flipped classroom, it is observed that flipped classroom was an effective learning method to enhance Indonesian undergraduate students' writing competence (Maharani et al., 2020). Another study related about the use of ICT in teaching and learning was study by Noriega (2016), in this study, the effect of M-learning on the development of students' writing skills was examined, and it was found that the use of mobile devices can increase students' attention and encouragement to improve their writing skills. The genre-based approach with mobile learning that was implemented in this class could motivate them in checking the contents related to the types of texts in the mobile device frequently. In addition, the existence of podcasts in the learning activity can help students become more aware of how the various stages of the text work (Noriega, 2016).

Among several features offered by ICT in the long run, social networking services play an important role in human's life. It is free to use for anyone; therefore, social networking services are designed to facilitate people to communicate, collaborate, and share things (Ma'ruf et al., 2019). The term "social network" refers to a network of interconnected websites where people may publish updates about themselves, communicate with one other, and exchange information with one another (Davis et al., 2012). It's worth noting that social networks were not initially built for academic purposes. However, because to the direct link between education and technological advancements, as well as changes in the types of learning environments, they have been used as educational purposes (Gupta, 2014). Discussions that can be carried out using smartphones' applications, as a way of integrating smartphones in the learning and teaching process, can provide opportunities to interact with teachers, as well as their friends, which contribute to their learning process and help them overcome learning difficulties, which is caused by the lack of communication, especially in the era of online learning (Mistar & Embi, 2016).

The implementation of social networking service in the classroom has brought some advantages in learning such as reduce anxiety level, increase the efficiency and mastery of assignment, contribute to making the higher score, and improving social interaction (Pursel & Xie, 2014). Moreover, research at Jambi University, Instagram and Facebook are the most popular social media platform among learners of English as a foreign language. When students have leisure time at home or when lecturers allow it in class, especially for group discussions, students use social media to learn English. Students can improve their English abilities using social media because of the variety of content available, and this encourages students to learn English through social media (Zam Zam Al Arif, 2019). Additionally, the positive impact of social media should be addressed in order to increase students' English proficiency. Research conducted by (Khodabandeh, 2018) also found good results regarding the use of social media for language learning, social networks used for educational purposes help non-English students to overcome the limitations of traditional methods of teaching English, increase their motivation, and pave the way for independent language learning.

One of the social media that has been widely used in teaching and learning activity is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is one of the huge changes in mobile applications

lately; WhatsApp users is growing fast on smartphones and also on computers (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). One of the studies in Indonesia shows that the most popular chat application among students nowadays is WhatsApp. Some of the reasons behind a large number of WhatsApp users among students including ease of use, practicality, efficiency, and ease in creating a learning community (classes in the form of groups). These advantages make WhatsApp as the most potential chat provider for sharing information and student academic communication (Zakirman & Rahayu, 2018).

WhatsApp is a very useful platform in EFL classes, in a study conducted by Dweikat (2018) on the use of WhatsApp and its benefits to ELT practicum at universities in Palestine, this study also examines students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp as a learning media. The results of the study revealed that students' perceptions of WhatsApp were positive, and helpful for ELT practicum. Students feel interested in the features provided by WhatsApp because they can use WhatsApp as a media to send and receive various types of material. In addition, WhatsApp is a very helpful medium to improve communication with supervisors, students state that they can remove the fear of consulting with supervisors. Another study by Linda & Ri'aeni (2018). The difference between this study from the first study is that this study focused on the use of WhatsApp in teaching writing skills. The result of this study is students have a positive response to the learning process, and WhatsApp helps students to enhance their ability in writing. Students show enthusiasm in using the WhatsApp platform because students stated that WhatsApp is not a boring media. The students also stated if they enjoy using WhatsApp because they can have the opportunity both to study individually or in pair which is it can help them in improving their achievement in writing. Study was conducted by Fattah (2015) also investigate about effectiveness of WhatsApp to develop students' writing skills. The result of this study is that the application of WhatsApp in writing classes could also increase students' active participation in English foreign language classrooms. Students have used this application for activities beside than studying such as chatting with friends, and in this study they used WhatsApp for learning writing in English. Therefore, students feel interested in using WhatsApp as a medium for learning. In addition, the idea of feeling free both intimate and place to learn something new was effective. They feel free to write their ideas directly on WhatsApp, they can also edit their writing if they feel the need to change it. All studies that have been mentioned discussed the topic regarding WhatsApp for teaching especially for writing in the university level. However, there is not much research regarding WhatsApp as media for teaching writing in the junior high school level. SMP Negeri 4 Pare is one of the schools that used WhatsApp a lot in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This school gives freedom to teachers in using any platform for teaching but most teachers in this school use WhatsApp and Google Classroom. Based on preliminary study, most teachers use both WhatsApp and Google classroom because these two platforms are easy to use. Each teacher in every class chooses a different platform and media, and they also have different techniques in teaching, although they use the same platform or media. Therefore, the writer wants to carry out research regarding students' perception of the use of WhatsApp in teaching writing in SMP Negeri 4 Pare, especially among ninth-grade students. Based on the assessment of the syllabus that is used in this school, there must be a skill assessment that is obtained from the writing assignment. The syllabus used by this school is designed from the K13 curriculum, wherein basic competencies number 4.1 to 4.3, ninth-grade students must be able to compile transactional and functional texts before continuing to the essay writing stage on basic competencies in the following semester. Based on the background that has been mentioned, *this study wants to observe about the perspective of nine-grade students of SMPN 04 on the use of WhatsApp groups for learning writing*. The results and suggestions are presented at the end of the study, which is expected to be useful for teachers, students, and future researchers.

METHOD

This study wants to observe students' perceptions about the use of WhatsApp as learning media in writing class during COVID-19 using a case study as its research design. A case study is a research strategy in which the researcher carefully investigates a program, event, activity, process, or group of individuals in a particular area (Creswell, 2018). This study used a case study to answer the proposed questions with the assumption that each student in the IX D class at SMPN 4 Pare may have a different perception.

The writer obtained data from 31 students of ninth grade of SMPN 4 Pare. From the writers' preliminary study, this school applied specific learning skills, especially writing. Each class does not have the same technique because each class has a different teacher. The writer chose the IX D class as a sample for participants because in this class, the teacher requires students to type simultaneously on WhatsApp. Feedback is also given by the teacher directly in the group. Not only do they get feedback from the teacher, but students also get feedback from their classmates.

This study used a questionnaire adapted from Ri'aeni (2018), Dweikat (2018), Handayani et al., (2018), the current study adapts several questions from three previous studies because of the need for adjustments to the learning technique carried out in the current study, besides that all previous studies were conducted before online learning, while the current study was conducted during online learning. In the previous study by Ri'aeni (2018), the questionnaire was used for collecting data regarding students' perception of teaching writing through WhatsApp. The questionnaire used by Dweikat (2018) also investigated the use and perception of WhatsApp. Meanwhile, in the study conducted by Sakkir & Abrar (2018), the questionnaire was used for collecting data regarding the use of Youtube as media in learning English. In the study conducted by Handayani et al., (2018), the questionnaire used for collecting data regarding the students' perception of Instagram in learning writing. In this current research, the writer changed the media into WhatsApp.

The questionnaire consists of 8 items and the writer also added subjective questions for number 2,3,7,8 to know the reason why did students choose the certain answer. Questions 1-6 asked about students' interest in using WhatsApp as their media for writing, and questions 7-8 asked about the learning process. There are two parts of the questionnaire; the first part is for collecting students' background information, including name, class, information about the internet network in their area, whether it is stable or unstable, and what they are using at home for online learning (WiFi/cellular data).

All items in this questionnaire have been consulted and validated by the supervisor before conducting the questionnaire tryout. The questionnaire tryout was conducted in IX D class that us taught by the same media and technique by the same teacher. The writer carried out a tryout to check the validity of each item in the questionnaire, where this class is also taught by the same teacher and uses the same technique in learning. The writer also asked students who filled out the questionnaire to check whether the language used in the questionnaire was easy to understand to reduce misunderstanding when answering it.

Descriptive statistics are used in this study to analyze data by describing the data that has been collected as it is, without any intention to generalize the data (Sugiyono, 2016). After the data had been collected, the writer calculated the percentage of the questionnaire result by using a simple statistical analysis.

$$P = f / N \times 100\%$$

Note:

- a. P is the mean of the students' perception based on the questionnaire
- b. f Total answer

c. N is the total number of the student

For the subjective answer, all answers were categorized by positive responses and negative responses. Data from this subjective answer be added according to the student's response to each item. Then, the writer made a conclusion drawn from the result of students' perceptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to the preliminary study conducted by the writer through interviews with teachers, WhatsApp in this school is used as a platform for teaching writing synchronously, where students send assignments given by the teacher in the form of text that is typed directly on WhatsApp. Assignments are sometimes carried out in groups or individually, depending on the type of text discussed during class. The following table presents of the result of the questionnaire completed by the students of SMP Negeri 4 Pare.

The findings show that students have positive perceptions toward the use of WhatsApp in teaching writing during the COVID-19 pandemic; this was proved by positive respnses given by students for questions 1 until 6 about their interest in the usage of WhatsApp as a learning writing platform, and also for questions 7 and 8 about the learning process that were done through WhatsApp. The detailed information will be explained as follows.

The first question asked if WhatsApp as media for learning writing can be accessed anywhere and anytime. There were 17 students chose strongly agree, and

Number	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Item 1	54,84%	45,16%	0,00%	0,00%
2	Item 2	25,81%	70,97%	3,23%	0,00%
3.	Item 3	3,23%	77,42%	16,13%	3,23%
4.	Item 4	12,90%	77,42%	9,68%	0,00%
5.	Item 5	32,26%	58,06%	6,45%	3,23%
6	Item 6	25,81%	54,84%	19,35%	0,00%
7	Item 7	3,23%	83,87%	12,90%	0,00%
8	Item 8	6,45%	90,32%	3,23%	0,00%

14 students chose agree. There were no students who chose strongly disagree.

The second question asked if WhatsApp as media makes students actively participate in learning and teaching activities. There were 8 of students who chose strongly agree and 22 students who chose agree. There was also 1 student who chose strongly disagree and there was no student who chose disagree. From the subjective question, the writer found some reasons why students chose a certain answer. Students provided reasons for having positive perceptions as follows:

AMN: "The usage is very easy and simple. It also does not require a high cost."

DLV: "Because the usage of this platform as learning media can be

accessed anywhere and anytime. I don't feel bored when learning while staying at home because I can discuss the material with my teacher freely and also chat with my friend. I can actively participate in the learning-teaching activity."

Table 1. Students' Perception on the Use of WhatsApp for Learning Writing

The third question asked if sending writing assignments to WhatsApp group is quite exciting for students. There was 1 student who chose strongly agree and 24 students who chose agree. There were also 5 students who chose strongly disagree, and 1 student chose disagree. From the subjective question, the writer found some reasons why students chose a certain answer. Students provided reasons for having positive perceptions as follows:

RHM: "We can see others' opinions, and we can discuss the difference in friends' work."

NRML: "Because it triggers my friends to become more responsible because their works will be discussed directly and there will be limited time to send our works in a group, it increases our self-discipline."

SPTI: "We can compete against time when sending the work to be the fastest and compare our works."

AMN: "We can practice our self-confidence, we also get an additional grade from the teacher, and we can share our knowledge with others."

The fourth question asked if sending writing assignments to WhatsApp group motivates students to do the assignment better. There were 4 students who chose strongly agree and 24 students who chose agree. No student who chose strongly disagree and 3 of students who chose disagree. From the subjective question, the writer found some reasons why students chose certain answers. Students provided reasons for having positive perceptions as follows:

IND: "Because if we write randomly (not seriously), we will get a comment from our supervisor; we should do it correctly so we will not feel ashamed with our friends."

DYN: "There are many friends in the group, and they will see my work, so I should do the assignment better."

DLV: "I remember that my work will be sent to the group, so I should do it better in order to get an active participation point (additional score) from the teacher."

The fifth question asked if WhatsApp's feature in learning writing helped students communicate with teachers and classmates. There were 10 students chose strongly agree, and 18 students chose agree. There were also 2 of students who chose strongly disagree, and 1 of student chose disagree. From the subjective question, the writer found some reasons why students chose a certain answer. Students provided reasons for having positive perceptions as follows:

DYN: "The usage of WhatsApp's feature really helps to send information."

IND: "Voice note is really helpful to convey the message because we can hear it clearly."

AMN: "Because it helps me in understanding more the material if the material in the book is not really clear. The explanation is sent in the form of audio or video in order to help us understand the material."

DLV: "The use of WhatsApp feature helps us in understanding the material easily. Suppose there's a material that I haven't understood, I can ask my teacher. I can also communicate and discuss with friends freely."

The sixth question asked if the use of WhatsApp in learning writing does not require a high cost. There were 8 students chose strongly agree, and 19 students chose agree. There were also 4 students who chose disagree, and there was no student chose disagree.

The seventh question asked if giving feedback to friends via WhatsApp is quite interesting. There were 2 students chose strongly agree, and 26 students chose

agree. There were also 3 students chose strongly disagree, and no student chose disagree. From the subjective question, the writer found some reasons why students chose a certain answer. Students provided reasons for having positive perceptions as follows:

DLV: "I can give feedback to my friends because I hope they will be better and increase their knowledge. They will also feel appreciated if they get feedback from us."

FR: "I agree, because if there are friends who make a mistake in writing, they should be given feedback so that they can be better."

DN: "Because we can give our opinion easily."

DV: "Because we can convey our opinion without meeting them face to face."

The eighth question asked if receiving feedback from teachers or friends via WhatsApp is quite interesting. There were 2 students chose strongly agree, and 28 students who chose agree. There was no student chose strongly agree and 1 student chose disagree. From the subjective question, the writer found some reasons why students chose a certain answer.

RHM: "I'm very happy with the compliment and comment that makes me do the assignment better."

NRML: "Because compliment can motivate me to learn better, and comment makes me more understand about errors I made before."

DV: "Because I can know what others' opinion they want to give me in online learning."

DISCUSSION

The findings show that students have positive perceptions toward the use of WhatsApp in teaching writing during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the finding showed that most of the students agree from 8 questions in the students' questionnaire. In addition, the writer also found the qualitative data collected from the subjective question that are written in some items of the questionnaire. The qualitative data shows that due to the COVID-19 situation, which requires students to study at home, students can bring their mobile phones for studying anywhere and anytime as long as they have a network connection with them. Internet subsidies from the government are sufficient to help them in accessing WhatsApp. In quantitative data, 54.84% of students chose to strongly agree on this statement. This is in line with the statement by Evan (2008), that the application of portable technology has been widely demanded by the majority of modern learners because they require to study anywhere and anytime (Evans, 2008).

Although learning in different places with a teacher, the use of WhatsApp in learning writing encourages them to actively participate in learning and teaching activities because this application is easy to access. There are 70,97% students chose agree with this statement. In addition, the teaching technique of the teacher, which was implemented synchronous learning, sometimes made them have to respond to teachers and other friends in real-time. This is also supported by students' answers in the questionnaire if sending work in the WhatsApp group can trigger them to be more responsible and increase their self-discipline also their competitiveness. Students also could see others' opinions and different work that is done by their friends; they could directly discuss it in the group. The teacher also gives an additional score to the student if they actively participate during the learning process. This is in line with the study by Dweikat (2018), WhatsApp was helpful for ELT practicum. Students feel interested in the features (group chat, voice note, picture,

and video) provided by WhatsApp because they can use WhatsApp as a media to send and receive various types of material.

Sending writing assignments through the WhatsApp group is quite exciting for students. 77,42% students chose agree with this statement. Findings from the questionnaire showed that this activity could increase students' self-confidence, encourage students' competitiveness, and increase their self-discipline. The writer found that the teacher constantly monitors them in order to see which one actively participates in an online class; the teacher will give an additional point to the student that actively participates in online learning, including sending their work, ask questions to the teacher, and give a comment to their friends' work. This is in line with the study by Fattah (2015) that the application of WhatsApp in writing classes could also increase students' active participation in English foreign language classrooms

WhatsApp group also motivates students to do the assignment better; findings from the questionnaire showed 77,42% students chose agree with this statement. Students felt they had to send excellent work in their group because many friends would read their writing. From this, we know that the use of teaching media using ICT in EFL learning could solve learning problems and help teachers design new techniques in teaching; it also encourages student willingness to learn English and implement enjoyable learning activities (Al-Munawwarah, 2014).

Using WhatsApp's feature in learning writing helped students communicate with teachers and their classmates. There are 58,06% students chose agree with this statement. Students think WhatsApp has many features that help them in communicating with teachers and friends, such as private messages and group chats. Teachers also apply these features a lot in teaching, for example sending pictures, audio or material during teaching that can help students understand more the material. This is line with the study by Dweikat (2018), WhatsApp is a very helpful medium to improve communication not only with friends but also with supervisors, students state that they can remove the fear of consulting with supervisors.

The use of WhatsApp does not require a high cost either. From the results of the questionnaire, 61,29% students chose agree with this statement. Both those students who use Wi-Fi or cellular data for learning needs said that WhatsApp does not require a high cost. Students get an internet subsidy every month from the government that helps them in accessing WhatsApp (Sajida & Ranjani, 2020).

In teaching and learning writing, of course, writing cannot be separated from the existence of feedback. Giving feedback to friends during synchronous learning in a WhatsApp group is quite interesting for them. Students like to provide feedback to friends because they want to share their knowledge. There are 83,87% students chose agree with this statement. They wanted to make their friends feel appreciated if get feedback. Students also said receiving feedback from the teacher and friends helped them in learning. There are also 90,32% students chose agree with this statement. According to the findings in the questionnaire, students feel curious about what their friend think about their work, so sending feedback through WhatsApp make it easy for them to express their thought. Compliments given by the teacher or friends through WhatsApp also make them feel happy and motivated to do the assignment better. Feedback from the teacher and friends also help them in revising their work. They need direction in the form of constructive feedback in order to improve their writing, therefore, feedback makes them aware of mistakes made in writing (F. Handayani & Handayani, 2020; Faroha et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

The result of this study reveals that (junior high school) students have positive perception about the use of WhatsApp for learning writing during online learning. Based on students' answers on the questionnaire, they have specific preferences that can be suggestions for future improvements when a teacher wants to include WhatsApp as a learning media in classroom activities. The learning

technique implemented by the teacher should continue in the future even when online learning is no longer implemented, it is because the use of technology made the students feel more motivated to study. Based on students' answers on the questionnaire, they have specific preferences that can be suggestions for future improvements when a teacher wants to include WhatsApp as a learning media in classroom activities. The teacher here also has to put a time limit when sending assignments in groups so that students can increase their self-discipline in online learning. The teacher should also provide constructive feedback to students to be motivated to be better. Students are expected to increase self-confidence because students will often appear in groups to provide opinions for group members to read. By increasing students' self-confidence, they could increase their active participation in a group discussion so that learning and teaching activities run well because students will get feedback from the teacher and friends. To provide feedback to friends, students should use a proper words so that other friends do not get offended. For the next researcher, the writer suggests that they could conduct the same research with different data collection techniques; in the present research, the writer only collects data from written questionnaires and subjective questions so that the data received is quite limited; the next researcher can conduct interviews to get in-depth qualitative data.

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