

**EFL-WRITING ACTIVITIES USING WHATSAPP GROUP:
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS DURING STUDY FROM HOME**

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This research aims to investigate writing activities using the WhatsApp group during the study from home amid the COVID-19 pandemic and students' perceptions about it. It is a qualitative research, in which the data were analyzed descriptively. This research was carried out at the Sentence-Based Writing class at IAIN Salatiga, Indonesia, in April - June 2020. This research participant involved 30 students. After conducting the research, the results revealed various students' perceptions. 63% of the total students possessed a positive perception toward the writing activities using the WhatsApp group, and the rest 37% of students preferred face-to-face meetings and perceived writing using WhatsApp group as boring, confusing, and distracting. After analyzing the WhatsApp group activities, this research can definitely provide teachers with knowledge regarding students' perceptions and writing activities carried out in the WhatsApp group.

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INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, WHO, profoundly concerned by the spread and severity rate, announced Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) as a pandemic (WHO 2020b). Since then, Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has infected almost all countries worldwide and causes offices and schools' closure. World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that school closure has affected children's health, children learning development, and education (WHO 2020a). In Indonesia, to reduce the COVID-19 spread, the Ministry of National Education and Culture of Indonesia issued a circular letter dealing with the process of teaching-learning amidst the pandemic of COVID-19. This letter issued a learning concept called study from home. It is a learning process conducted from home, which emphasizes life skills and productivity. The learning process should consider the students' condition and learning access. Besides, it requires qualitative feedback rather than quantitative value (score) (Circular Letter of Ministry of National Education and Culture of Indonesia 2020).

This instruction required teachers and students to change the process of teaching-learning from face-to-face to online system. They were demanded to rapidly learn and adjust the process of teaching-learning to adjust to this unprecedented circumstance. In the field of English as a foreign language, teachers and students have no distinctions in coping with it (M. Amin and Sundari 2020). In executing this instruction, teachers have tried to apply several media applications to do the process of online teaching-learning. Several researchers have demonstrated media employed by lecturers during this pandemic, such as Google Classroom, WhatsApp Group, social media, Google Classroom, Zoom meeting, and YouTube (Abidin and Arizona 2020; Jamaluddin et al. 2020; Pakpahan and Fitriani 2020). Besides, Edmodo, Cisco Webex, Zenius, Indonesia X, Meja Kita, Icando, Google for Education, Microsoft Office 365, Rumah Belajar, Quipper School, Kelas Pintar, Ruangguru, and Sekolahmu also could be utilized (Kusumaningrum and Wijayanto 2020).

In fact, the learning process through a study from home has become new issues in the learning process. It is because the online teaching-learning process

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during the study from home is something new for most teachers and students in Indonesia. According to a research conducted by Lestyanawati & Widyantoro (2020), at least six problems have risen during online learning: teachers' disability in accessing technology, school facilities to support online learning, the difficulties in explaining the learning materials, students' limitation to access the internet, parents' support in online learning, and students' socio-economic background. Besides, online learning also caused students' boredom and less engagement in the learning process (Dhawan 2020). Moreover, internet quota, unstable internet networks, and unfamiliarity with the applications used are also obstacles to online learning implementation (Abidin and Arizona 2020; Jamaluddin et al. 2020; Kusumaningrum and Wijayanto 2020).

Those problems also happen to language learning. Three barriers were faced by Indonesian EFL students using Moodle/Google Classroom: slow internet connection, e-learning unfamiliarity, and physical condition such as eye strain (Octaberlina and Muslimin 2020). Not only students but EFL lecturers in China also encountered challenges, such as EFL teachers' typical teaching, inadequate conditions of network for online teaching and learning, as well as the possibility of invalid management of classroom amidst online teaching (Gao and Zhang 2020). Although many websites and applications assist language learning outside the class and EFL teachers have conducted the teaching-learning process through online synchronously and asynchronously based on the school's policy (Atmojo and Nugroho 2020), most students have a moderate level of autonomous learning. It is because most students spent their free time to exist on social media rather than developing their language skills (Orawiwatnakul and Wichadee 2017).

On the other hand, the four skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) serve an essential role in any quest of language learning (Sadiku 2015). Besides, as one of the language skills, writing is a complex activity, so the teacher needs to understand the writing complexity to reach the effective teaching of writing (Cheung 2016). Many factors restrain a good instruction of writing, such as, time of instruction, educators' beliefs and planning about writing, school, district, state, and national policies, including political, social, historical, and cultural impacts

(Graham 2019). Thus, today's condition during the COVID-19 pandemic also influences students' writing learning. It also happens to university students who learn writing. They need to adapt to such situations to make more effective learning writing.

Moreover, this situation forces EFL teachers to rethink the standard of teaching and learning practices in writing class. It also transforms the standard form of traditional grading practice that may cause inappropriate learning pressure for students into more autonomous learning (Premont 2020). The writing lecturers need to find an effective strategy or media to cope with writing problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the lecturer's ways is to find effective and efficient media to conduct the process of online English teaching and learning. One of the media that can be adopted to teach during a pandemic is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is an application that should be connected to the internet to communicate with the lecturer, students, family, or other people in our contact. It provides many features that help users make WhatsApp group, send unlimited messages, images, videos, voice notes, and exchange ideas, thoughts, and emotions with each other (Linda and Ri'aeni 2018). Furthermore, WhatsApp Group is a familiar distance learning medium often used in Indonesia (Yensy 2020).

Several studies have investigated mobile phone use in the process of learning, including WhatsApp usage as one of the applications installed on a mobile phone (Motteram, Dawson, and Al-Masri 2020). Specifically, in writing activities, research conducted by (Susanti and Tarmuji 2016) revealed that teaching writing using WhatsApp could improve students' language skills, motivation (Allagui 2014), and rapport because WhatsApp is an application that suited to learners world. Concerning critique writing proficiency, Awada (2016) has discovered that the mediation of WhatsApp was more effective compared to the regular instruction and could increase students' motivation to learn. Fattah's (2015) t-test analysis results also uncovered that students' writing skills were significantly affected by the WhatsApp technique. Moreover, the learning activities that could be employed through this application were brainstorming,

drafting, teachers' feedback, quick writing, starter, peer-feedback, gathering information, elaborating exercises, and making a checklist. Another study investigated by Ayuningtyas (2018) illustrated that WhatsApp, as the most accessed application for the mobile phone, could be used as media in language teaching, and the activities employed through this application were such as learning of vocabulary and words' combination to the sentence.

Seeing many classes have implemented WhatsApp as media to teach language, of course, it gave various students' perceptions of dealing with this media's usage. Amin & Sundari (2020) have surveyed Indonesian EFL students' preferences, containing their perception and perspectives for utilizing applications and platforms during remote teaching situations. Of the three platforms, WhatsApp had the most noteworthy score on learner fit, meaning focus practicality, and positive impact. A study conducted by Mbukusa (2018) also indicated that students enjoyed learning using WhatsApp as a learning tool. On the other hand, this research also revealed that WhatsApp's use triggered a negative impact on tertiary students who did not own a smartphone. Besides, Izyani & Embi (2016) asserted that students' perception of WhatsApp's use as the tool of ESL was that WhatsApp helped them learn a language better and improve their language proficiency. Moreover, students also had a positive perception of learning writing paragraphs using the WhatsApp application (Ma'ruf, Fadilah, and Basofi 2019). Nevertheless, learning writing paragraph is different from writing sentences. In writing sentences, students are expected to construct good sentences with appropriate grammar and punctuation. Thus, the writers would like to investigate this gap concerning the students' perception of sentence writing class using the WhatsApp group.

Based on the elaboration of the study's background above, the writers would like to investigate the sentence writing activities which could be elaborated on the WhatsApp group and the students' perception toward these activities using the WhatsApp group.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach for collecting and analyzing the data. This qualitative research was conducted to 30 students of an English Education Department at IAIN Salatiga, who took Sentence Based Writing subject. They were chosen as the research subject since the classroom media and their subject with the research objectives. They became the primary source of the data besides the documentation taken from writing activities on the WhatsApp group. The research was prepared, starting in April 2020, and was held during June 2020.

Method of Collecting Data

There were two techniques that the researchers utilized to collect the data. They were questionnaire and documentation. Questionnaire was employed in this research to dig up students' perceptions toward the writing activities using the WhatsApp group. Open-ended questions need responses from respondents dealing with their opinion that would give information to the researchers (Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge 2009). This research's respondents were given a question through google form to know their perception.

The second method of collecting data was documentation. One of the documents used as a data source was a photograph that would give additional information and develop an existing theory (Hancock et al. 2009). It was used to investigate what writing activities were carried out on the WhatsApp group. The documentation was conducted by capturing (screenshot) the WhatsApp group's writing activities during the writing class.

Method of Analysis Data

The data collected through questionnaires and documentation were analyzed using the theory suggested by Lacey and Luff (2009), including transcribing, organizing the data, familiarizing, coding, and themes. The researchers conducted the data analysis through the following steps (1) Data Organization: the data submitted by the respondents through google form were downloaded; (2) Familiarizing: the researchers started to analyze the response submitted by the

respondents to know their perception; (3) Coding: the respondents' name were changed into their initial name to hide the real respondents and coding was also used to code the respondents' responses into negative and positive perception; (4) Theme: the questionnaire data which were analyzed on familiarizing steps

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The Writing Activities Found in WhatsApp Group

Based on the documentation on the WhatsApp group of Sentence Based writing class, it was found that the lecturer conducted at least five activities during the writing class. The writing activities are presented below:

Explaining Material

The first writing activity conducted by the lecturer on the WhatsApp group was sharing and explaining the writing materials.



Figure 1. Documentation of Explaining Material Activity

This class consisted of topics: simple, compound, complex sentence, active and passive voice, present tense, past tense, punctuations, etc. As seen in Figure 1, the material was about punctuation. It was shared in the form of Ms. Word file and YouTube link. Besides that, the lecturer also shared pictures and ppt in other meetings. Then, the lecturer explained the materials using voice notes and text.

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The lecturer gave time to students to read materials or watch the videos. Students could easily download the material file or click the YouTube link. Students had been added to the WhatsApp Group at the beginning of the semester to readily involve them in the writing activities. Moreover, since all students had the WhatsApp, they did not need to download it from the App Store or Play Store.

Discussing Materials

After the explanation step, the lecturer asked the students to have a short discussion dealing with the materials explained before. The lecturer firstly delivered a question or statement to students as the cue to start the discussion. The lecturer's question or statement led students to discuss the material with their colleagues. They created their discussion by writing comments based on the lecturer's question or statement. The following is the documentation of discussion activity among students in writing class.

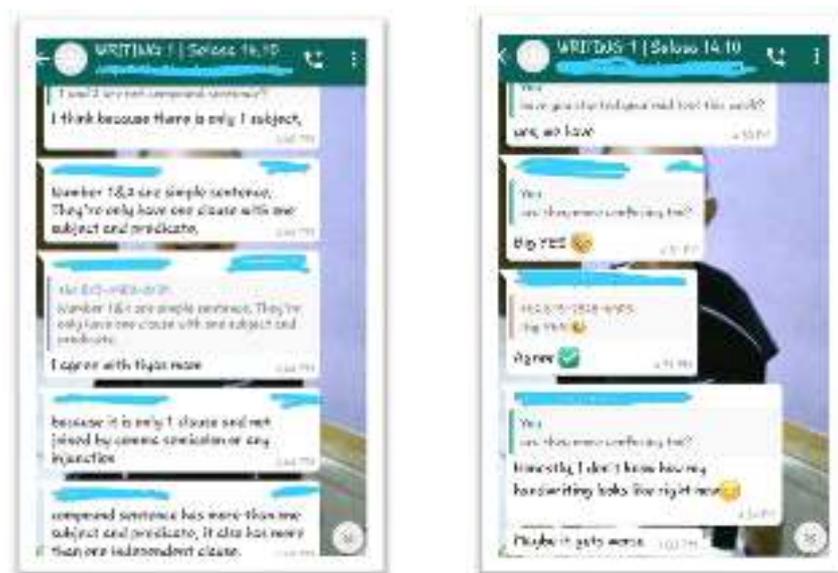


Figure 2. Documentation of Class Discussion Activity

As seen in Figure 2, the discussion was about compound sentences. The lecturer had already shared the materials, and then the students discussed them, whether they had questions. They could ask the lecturer or peer-friends. Figure 2 presents how students conveyed their opinion regarding a particular case of the compound sentence. Other students then responded to their peer-friends' opinion.

Composing Sentences

The primary goal of this sentence writing class was that students could write sentences with appropriate grammar and punctuation. The following is an example of composing sentence activity conducted on the WhatsApp group.



Figure 3. Documentation of Composing Sentence Activity

As presented in Figure 3., the lecturer gave students instructions to compose sentences. The lecturer provided specific limited time in composing the sentences. It was due to the limited time of the teaching-learning process. Once students had done the composition, they posted in on the WhatsApp Group by writing the sentences and their names below the sentences. It was easier for lecturers to see who had composed the sentences instructed and who had not.

Editing Sentences

Editing was one of the primary activities in this writing class. Besides composing sentences, students were also expected to edit the sentences to make their sentences more perfect. The following is the documentation of editing activity in the WhatsApp group.

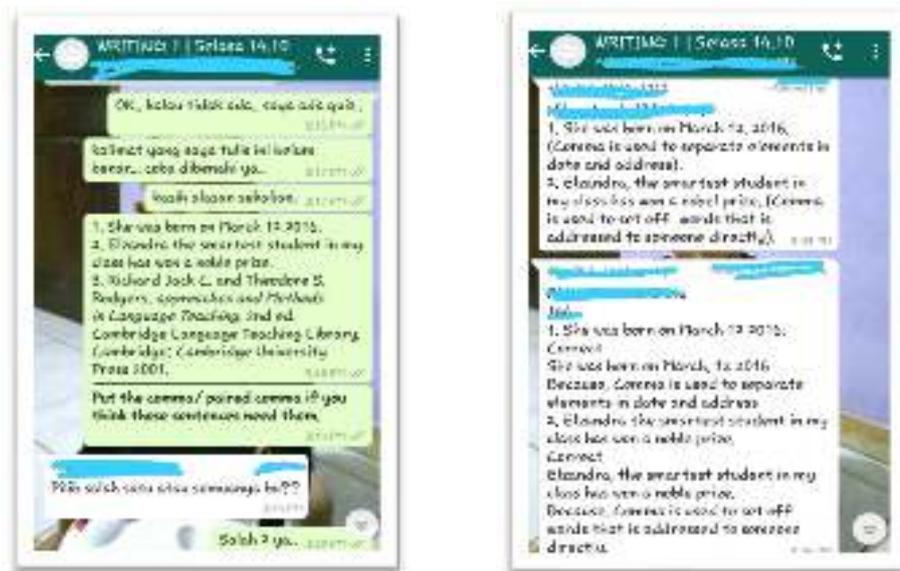


Figure 4. Documentation of Editing Sentence Activity

As displayed in Figure 4., the lecturer presented several sentences that were not correct. The students were asked to fix the sentence. Students were also asked to provide reasons for correcting the sentences carried out. From the three cases presented, students were asked to select two cases for editing. Students could immediately write their edited sentences on the WhatsApp group.

Posting Writing Product

Writing is a productive language skill. Thus, students were expected to produce writing products at the end of the class. Students were asked to produce a product of their writing skills. The following is the example of students' work to create a pamphlet.



Figure 5. Documentation of Students' Work Activity

In this activity, the students were previously given instructions to make writing products. In this case, it was a seminar pamphlet. Instructions were delivered via the WhatsApp group. The lecturer provided a description of the pamphlet that should consist of the theme/name of the seminar, speakers, venue, day and date, contact person, how to register, ticket fee if not free, the committee/holder, facilities, etc. Students were given the freedom to choose the application that would be used to make the pamphlet. Students were asked to pay attention to the sentences they wrote on the pamphlet. Products should be posted in the WhatsApp group before the predetermined deadline. The lecturer also provided facilities for students to ask if they had problems during the making of the assigned pamphlets.

The Result of the Questionnaire of Students' Perception of Writing Activity on WhatsApp Group

The following is the result of students' responses to the questionnaire that asked about their perception of writing activities on the WhatsApp group. The students' perceptions were categorized into negative and positive perceptions. The positive perception was symbolized with (+), and the negative perception was symbolized with (-).

Table 1. The Result of the Questionnaire of Students' Perception of Writing Activity on WhatsApp Group

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No	Respondents	Responses	Perception Category
1	SAD	The class is not as complicated as the other class.	+
2	AACN	The lecturer could manage the class on the WhatsApp group and give students a chance to discuss through the WhatsApp group.	+
3	EDAC	It is a really boring class.	-
4	RY	The class facilitates students in doing the task and learn the material.	+
5	MR	It is a fun class.	+
6	ELRK	It is a little bit confusing.	-
7	AC	I feel confused about the material.	-
8	BAEA	The teacher often makes various activities in the WA group.	+
9	MA	The teacher explains the material clearer, although it only uses voice notes and WA chat.	+

10	WH	The material and class are accessible because it uses WA group.	+
11	NF	The class does not burden the students.	+
12	SN	It is a really challenging class because I have to be ready and focus on the group.	+
13	ABF	This class is enjoyable; it does not need any other difficult application.	+
14	RMA	It is hard to understand the material.	-
15	UQ	It is a really boring class.	-
16	ZSIS	It really impresses me because the lecturer explains the material clearer using a voice note.	+
17	AN	I enjoy the class because the class is not too strict.	+
18	UKAH	When learning using WAG, sometimes, only some students pay attention to the class, while the rest only writes their attendant list.	-
19	ANA	Learning writing using WAG	+

- on a mobile phone looks more relaxed, and we can do other jobs while joining the online class.
- 20 MDN It is really fun and interesting. +
- 21 M I got a problem understanding the material because I prefer face-to-face meetings. -
- 22 AZ I love this class because it uses an application that is easy to access and use. +
- 23 ADP It a really fun class, and I could understand the material well. +
- 24 RDL I prefer face-to-face meetings because I could more understand the material. -
- 25 TS I could follow the class well. +
- 26 FSM I prefer a face-to-face meeting because it is more effective than an online class. -
- 27 AR It is a really fun class, and I could understand the material well. +
- 28 HR It is not worthy for me because the class is not -

challenging at all

29 JB The class is full of jokes
comments among learners -
that distract the class.

30 DJ The class is simple, and I
could enjoy and join the class +
wherever I am.

(Source: Processed data, 2020)

Of the total 30 respondents, it was found that 19 students' responses indicated positive perception, and 11 students' responses showed negative perception. The results of the students' response are presented in the diagram below:

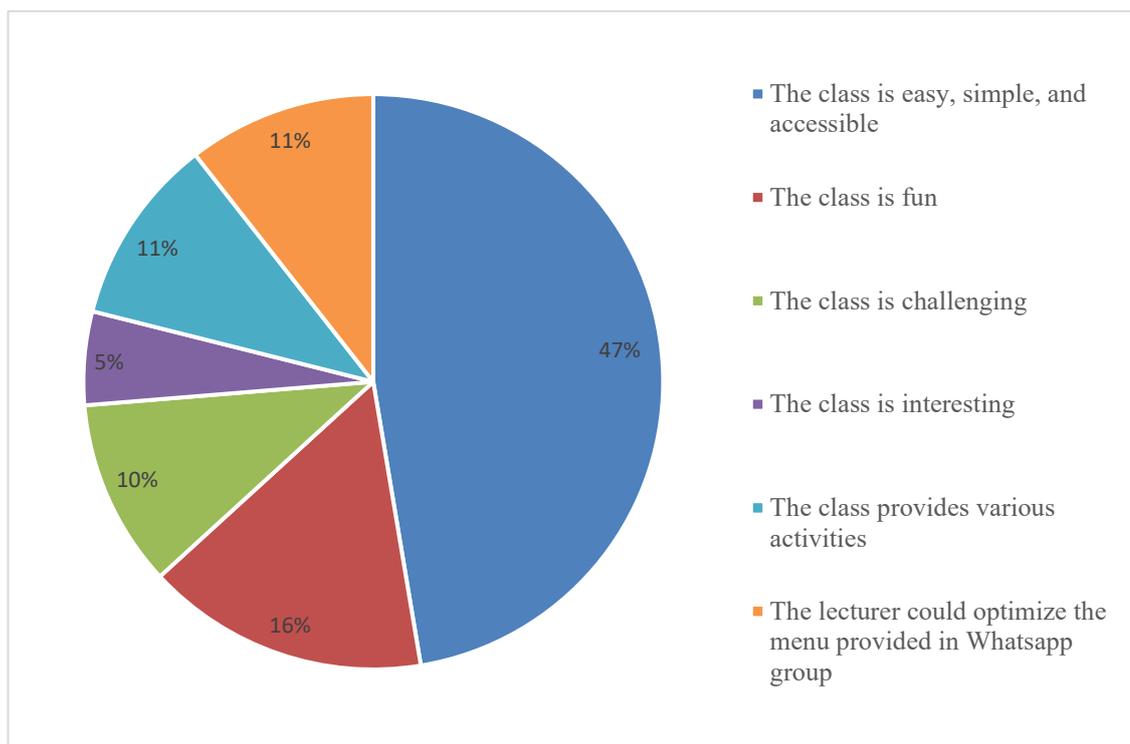


Figure 6. The Diagram of Positive Perceptions on Writing Activities on WhatsApp Group

Based on Figure 6 above, it can be seen that from 19 students who had a positive perception of writing activities on the WhatsApp group, nine students said that the class was easy, simple, and accessible. Three students wrote that the class was fun. Two students responded that the class was challenging. Two students said that the class provided various activities. There was only one student who wrote that the class was interesting. Besides, the remaining responded that the lecturer could optimize the menu provided in the WhatsApp group. The following is the diagram of students' negative perception of writing activities on the WhatsApp group.

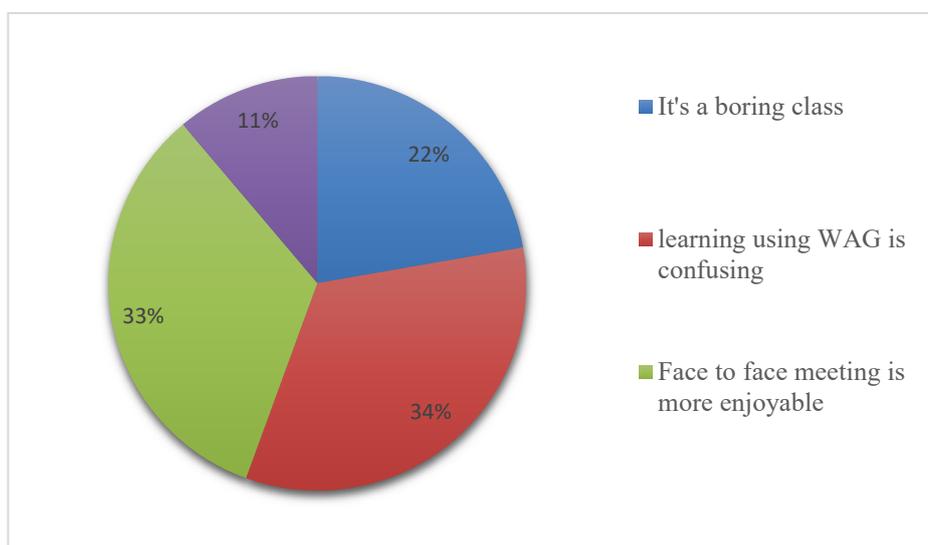


Figure 7. The Diagram of Negative Perceptions on Writing Activities on WhatsApp Group

Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that from 11 students who had a negative perception of writing activities on the WhatsApp group, three students responded that learning using the WhatsApp group was confusing. Three students responded that they preferred to have face-to-face meetings rather than learning using the WhatsApp group. Two students responded that writing activity on the WhatsApp group was boring. Moreover, one student wrote that students chatting among each other on the WhatsApp group distracted the learning activity.

Discussion

Based on the findings revealed in this research, it was found that five activities were conducted in the WhatsApp group. The activities carried out were not only the primary activities that were usually conducted on common writing activities but also consisted of a series of activities that supported the writing activities itself, such as sharing and explaining the material and discussing the material. It is in accord with research Raiman et al. (2017), which also exhibited that teaching employing WhatsApp helped the teacher share material quickly within the group and created a discussion on the WhatsApp group. The familiarity with using the WhatsApp application made students enjoy the class. Moreover, regarding discussion activity using WhatsApp Group, Munawaroh (2019) exposed that teachers and students could discuss the problems they faced. Students could post their work in the group, which could invite other students to give a response. In this way, they could solve their difficulties. Those activities had also been carried out in this current study. The students conveyed their opinion regarding a particular case of the compound sentence. Other students then responded to their peer-friends' opinion. It is also consistent with Kamila (2019) that online media such as WhatsApp group could attract students' interest and motivation (Allagui 2014; Awada 2016) to have a discussion with the peer about the specified subject.

Furthermore, composing sentence activity is the main writing activity, which was the primary goal of learning sentence writing. In accordance with research conducted by Dewi (2019), teachers could create varied writing activities through the WhatsApp group, including writing sentences and text. In this study, students were asked to post their composed sentences in the group. Moreover, editing activity is one of the vital parts of the writing process. Editing is part of reviewing the writing process, where the students try to check and make a correction to sentences written before (Díaz Galvis 2011). The editing model is useful for analyzing intellectual writing (Oba et al. 2017). The editing process will raise students' error awareness made at their proficiency level and help complete the learning writing feedback-revision cycle (Li and Hegelheimer 2013). In this study, it was carried out by editing certain cases of compound sentences provided

by the lecturer. By giving the reason for the editing, students could learn to recognize the error in writing and increase their proficiency level.

Besides, the WhatsApp group also supported students to post their writing products. It could be in the form of a pamphlet, social media captions, posters, infographics, and so on. This current study's finding showed that the product produced by the students was in the form of a seminar pamphlet. Producing a product is essential in writing activities to know how far students can elaborate on their writing knowledge and creativity in the form of a useful product for their daily lives. Writing as a productive skill is vital because it gives students a chance to practice real-life activities in the classroom, and it is used to know how much the students master the writing skill (Hossain 2015).

Other findings showed various students' perceptions of dealing with writing activities on the WhatsApp group. 63% of students had a positive perception of writing activities. They thought that writing activities using the WhatsApp group was fun, challenging, and interesting. It was because the use of instant messaging in online learning created strong bonding between learners and teachers (Awada 2016). Besides, they had a positive perception of the WhatsApp group's writing activities because the lecturer could optimize the facilities/menu/features on the WhatsApp group to conduct the writing activities. Also, it was due to the lecturer's online teaching experience. As Bailey & Lee (2020) discovered, teachers with online teaching experience were observed to have fewer impediments and could utilize a more extensive exhibit of activities and communication channels. Thus, the writing activities carried out in this research were varied, and it could avoid the monotonous class. Since WhatsApp is the most downloaded application in Indonesia, students did not have any learning problems using the WhatsApp group. It is in line with what Zaid (2011) stated that computer-mediated and web-assisted composition becomes helpful media and facility for students in the writing process.

On the other hand, 37% of students negatively perceived writing activities using the WhatsApp group. They stated that writing activities using the WhatsApp group was boring because they could not interact directly face-to-face. Most

students had negative perceptions of the WhatsApp group's writing activities because they preferred to have a face-to-face class rather than an online class. Therefore, it caused some confusion in understanding the materials. It was one of the weaknesses of teaching using the WhatsApp group. Teachers and students could not see students when they interacted with each other, which resulted in boredom (Raiman et al. 2017). It can be overcome by combining WhatsApp activities with other platforms so that students do not get bored quickly, such as Zoom meeting and YouTube (Abidin and Arizona 2020; Jamaluddin et al. 2020; Pakpahan and Fitriani 2020). Besides, Edmodo, Cisco Webex, Zenius, Indonesia X, Meja Kita, Icando, Google for Education, Microsoft Office 365, Rumah Belajar, Quipper School, Kelas Pintar, Ruangguru, and Sekolahmu also could be utilized (Kusumaningrum and Wijayanto 2020).

Students also affirmed that they were confused with online learning. It can be handled by asking students whether they have difficulty. Then, the teacher can give a separate explanation to the students via personal message. It can also help students who feel shy to ask in the WhatsApp group to have their questions answered by the teacher. Besides, students' interactions among others during the writing class distracted them from following the activity because they should scroll up more chats to find the lecturer's explanations. In this case, the lecturer can make a rule at the beginning of the learning about how they can interact with each other without disturbing the teaching-learning process (Napratilora, Lisa, and Bangsawan 2020).

Unlike other platforms' weaknesses requiring large internet quota, WhatsApp saved more quota (Abidin and Arizona 2020; Munawaroh 2019). It made it easy for students who, due to the pandemic, consumed a lot of internet quota. Likewise, for disability to access the technology since WhatsApp was familiar for teachers and students, they had no difficulty operating it. Students could save the material and discussion materials directly so that students could re-reading them (Munawaroh 2019). Therefore, the teaching-learning process could run efficiently. It supports Amin & Sundari's (2020) study that WhatsApp had the

most noteworthy score on learner fit, meaning focus practicality and positive impact.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Exploring more language learning activities will impact more success in writing class through an online application or platform. Students' perception is needed to know regarding their feeling and acceptance toward learning activities. Thus, the teacher and lecturer can evaluate and improve the next learning activities that fit their needs. The learning activities chosen should support the primary goal of language learning itself. Hopefully, this research result could be a reference for language lecturer/teacher who conducts writing class using WhatsApp application. The solutions proposed in this study can be applied to overcome the same difficulty faced by the students. However, this study is only limited to the use of WhatsApp in one Islamic university in Indonesia. Future research can explore the use of various applications in the English teaching-learning process, especially concerning writing skills. The next researcher also can broaden the research's subject and object to provide more comprehensive insight to the readers, explicitly teachers as the practitioner.

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