

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter represents the following subheadings: (1) Background, (2) Research Problem, (3) The Objective of the Study, and (4) The Significance of the Study.

1.1 Background of the Study

English is an important language to be learned for some reasons. English is one of the international languages which is crucial to be learned in all countries in the world. Furthermore, according to Rao (2019), English is an international language which has an important role in communication to interact with other people in the world. Moreover, Teladan (2020) argued that English is an important language for communication and it is one of the compulsory subjects in Indonesia's system of education, and has the primary objective of learning four skills to achieve communicative skills. English is learned as a compulsory subject from junior high school to university level.

In learning English, one of the most important skills to be mastered is writing. Hyland (2013) stated that writing is a technique for sharing individual feelings and writing courses construct someone's views on the topic. The people will share their ideas on the topic to others, and then the person's ideas can be different from others' ideas because it depends on their belief. Moreover, Fulwiler (2002) argued that writing is the method whereby thinkers explore the world. In addition, Nunan (2003) argued that people can express their emotions or feelings

through writing, and also gather ideas and combine them into a good piece of writing. Writing can be summarized as an attempt to describe the writer's thoughts, feelings, or ideas in written form.

Despite its importance, writing is one of the most complex skills to be mastered. Firstly, writing necessitates a lot of hard thinking to generate ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, and compositions (Habibi, Wachyuni & Husni, 2017). Furthermore, Harmer (2004) stated that writing requires the learners to concentrate on appropriate language use, where they can consult dictionaries, grammar books, and other resources. It indicates that writing is becoming more difficult not only because of the concept but also the vocabulary and appropriate structure. It is how the English students present their ideas in writing correctly.

Some studies suggested that Indonesian students encountered problems in writing. A study conducted by Octaviana (2016) revealed that in learning writing, students encountered difficulties, which were primarily due to their limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. A study conducted by Toba, Noor, and Sanu (2019) discovered that Indonesian EFL students had difficulties with writing aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanics, and they also had personal reasons such as a lack of writing motivation, a lack of writing practice, writing anxiety, a dislike for writing, a lack of writing practice, a negative perception of writing and insufficient time given for the writing test. Aryanti (2016) assumed that most of Indonesian learners still struggle with grammatical issues. The greatest challenge stems from the cultural differences between English and the learners' mother tongue, so it is possible to

know that the production of their writing does not 'sound' well in appropriate English culture.

In this era, information and communication technology (ICT) rapidly develops. The development of ICT has naturally influenced all aspects in the world, especially in education. In this era, social media has evolved into an important tool for social interaction. Mismara (2019) stated that social media have been adapted in contemporary methods. Social media has changed the way people socialize and communicate with one another. It has also changed the way people share information, exchange knowledge, and learn.

WhatsApp, one of the social networking services, is beneficial to be used to enhance writing activities. According to Bouhnik and Deshen (2014), WhatsApp has academic advantages, such as teachers availability and accessibility sending the materials and the chance for students to assist one another. So, it is easier for the students to get the materials from WhatsApp. Furthermore, Fattah (2015) claimed that using WhatsApp is easier to communicate and WhatsApp's effect can provide students with a chance to learn better, free opportunity to practice the language, an opportunity for students to share their opinions with others, and a more comprehensive relationship between lecturer and students. It means the effect of WhatsApp is making time effectively and making a good learning and teaching process. In addition, Ma'ruf et al., (2019) stated that the benefits of using WhatsApp in writing activities, such as: providing the opportunity for peer review, grammatical improvement, perceived progress of vocabulary, and independence from time and location.

WhatsApp Group (WAG) is one of the features used for writing activities. Susilo (2014) claimed that WhatsApp Group have the potential to be used for teaching and learning, online academic discussions, and to create a promising virtual tool in English learning. WhatsApp Groups can support the interaction of up to 250 group members. According to Bouhnik and Deshen (2014), sending and receiving a variety of media such as text, photos, and documents are the features of WhatsApp.

In relation to this, a preliminary study was conducted through informal interview with one of the teachers of SMKN 4 Palembang. It revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, this school implemented an online teaching and learning system and most of the teachers used WhatsApp as a tool for teaching and learning process. WhatsApp was effective for writing activity because it can attach file so the students can write and share the file (LA, personal communication, June 9th, 2021).

Additionally, there are some previous related studies to this matter. First, a study conducted by Ma'ruf et al., (2019) which focused on English students' perceptions of using WhatsApp in paragraph writing class. This study revealed that using WhatsApp in paragraph writing class had positive attitudes for students to improve the teaching and learning process. Secondly, a study conducted by Awada (2016) which discovered the effect of WhatsApp on critique writing proficiency and perception toward learning. This study revealed that the use of WhatsApp improve participants' critical writing skill and increasing their motivation to learn in a more effective way than the regular instruction. Then, a

study conducted by Fattah (2015) which focused on the effectiveness on the use of WhatsApp messenger as one of mobile learning techniques to develop students' writing skills. This study indicated that WhatsApp technology can also help students to participate more actively in the EFL classroom. And last, a study conducted by Linda and Ri'aeni (2018) which focused on WhatsApp messenger as a mobile media to learn writing for EFL students. This study revealed that WhatsApp messenger brings the learners' interest, and they have positive reactions to using it.

Considering those conditions, the researcher was interested to do research under the title "Students' Perceptions on the Use of Whatsapp in Writing Activities: A Case Study at SMKN 4 Palembang".

1.2 Problem of the Study

Based on the background, the research problem is formulated in the following question: What were the students' perceptions on the use of WhatsApp in writing activities at SMKN 4 Palembang?

1.3 Objective of the Study

In accordance with the problem above, the objective of this study is to find out the students' perceptions on the use of WhatsApp in writing activities at SMKN 4 Palembang.

1.3 Significance of the study

The results of this study were expected to provide beneficial contributions for many people. This study provides the information and description to understand the students' perceptions on the use of WhatsApp in writing activities.

1) For Teachers of English

This study was expected to provide information on students' perceptions on the use of WhatsApp in writing activities. It was expected to be used as one of the considerations in enhancing writing activities.

2) For the Researcher herself

This study was expected to gain the researcher's experience in educational research, especially in qualitative research study.

3) For Other Researchers

This study was expected to be used as a reference for other researchers to write their research about online learning especially with the use of social media in writing activity.