

Facebook Group in Writing Activities: Students' Voices

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Abstract

This study was aimed to find out students' perceptions on the use of Facebook group in writing activities. The design of this study was a qualitative research with a case study. This study was conducted at one of senior high schools in Palembang, with two eleventh-grade students of natural science class and two students of social science class by using maximum variation sampling technique. In collecting data, one-on-one interview with open-ended questions through phone was used in this study. The data were analyzed by using thematic analysis in the form of codes and themes. The findings of the study demonstrated that students perceived the use of Facebook in writing activities brought both benefits and drawbacks. The benefits were (1) Facebook group assisted the students in the process of writing in terms of planning, drafting, and final version, (2) Facebook group facilitated the students to practice the component of writing in terms of organization, content, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar, (3) Facebook group encouraged students' participation, (4) Facebook group boosted students' motivation and confidence to write, and (5) Facebook group was easy to access because of steady internet connection. Nevertheless, the drawbacks of the Facebook group in writing activities as perceived by the students covered (1) Facebook group did not promote the editing process of writing, (2) Facebook group did not assist the students in using capitalization and punctuation, (3) the students got distracted by other features of Facebook, and (4) the students received slow feedbacks for their writing from the teacher and classmates.

Keywords: *Students perceptions, Facebook group, Writing activities*

1. Introduction

Writing is the activity of organizing ideas, opinions, and feelings into a written form. According to Nunan (2003), writing is the activity of finding the ideas, thinking about the way to express, arranging into a statement and paragraph, and conveying them to the readers. Additionally, Ghaith (2002) stated that writing is a complex process which enables the writers to investigate their thoughts and ideas, and make them can be seen and read by the readers. In conclusion, writing is the process of conveying thoughts and ideas through written and readable forms.

In the context of English language teaching, writing is important to be infused to students. According to

Emmons (2003, as cited in Younes & Albalawi, 2015), writing is a basic skill that is required for English students to master English language. Afterwards, Rae (2020) stated that writing had a significant impact on communication skills because grammar, spelling, punctuation, gestures, and paralinguistic could be improved when learning writing. Therefore, writing is a beneficial skill to be taught to students.

Nevertheless, writing is considered to be most complicated skill to learn. According to Rao (2019), writing is the hardest skill in that it requires English learners to spend more time to learn it. In addition, Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that writing is the most difficult skill since it requires the writers to generate and arrange their writing ideas, and translate the ideas into readable texts. Moreover, Nunan (1989) indicated that writing is the most complex and difficult skill as it requires many elements such as content,

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sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling. From the facts above, it is evident that writing is the most difficult skill to learn.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously changed the teaching and learning activities, including writing activities in EFL classrooms. According to Abidah et al. (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic generally had a significant impact on the world of education, including the education in Indonesia as it has switched the teaching and learning activities to via online. Afterwards, Ariani and Tawali (2021) stated that the teaching and learning activities that were previously held face to face must be carried out fully online on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, this situation obligates the English teacher to teach writing via online. In brief, the spread of the COVID-19 leads to the teaching and learning activities to be carried out via online.

In relation to this, the English teachers utilize technology in order to solve this problem. According to Hastomo (2016), the use of technology could help teacher explain, deliver, and transfer materials in teaching and learning activities. Additionally, research by Ahmadi (2018) found that technology helps teachers adapt classroom activities, improve language learning, and facilitate language learning. Therefore, the use of technology is beneficial for teaching and learning activities.

In the context of teaching and learning writing, one kind of beneficial technology that can be used is Facebook. According to Majid et al. (2012), Facebook is a social networking site which can be utilized as an educational tool that promotes online communication and interaction between a teacher and students and among students. In addition, Roberts (2009) stated that one of the reasons why Facebook is beneficial for foreign language classrooms, including writing class by virtue of promoting the teaching and learning activities even outside of the class. In summary, Facebook is useful to facilitate teaching and learning writing.

Facebook is beneficial when it comes to the writing activities because it has a feature that is called Facebook group. According to Shih (2013), utilizing Facebook group enabled English teachers to transfer knowledge to the students in various ways such as online meeting and discussion. In addition, research by Al-Hammody (2014) found the benefits of using Facebook group in writing activities, in which students can socialize, share knowledge, give and receive feedback, and learn new words. In brief, Facebook group benefits the English teacher and the students in writing activities.

There have been some previous studies conducted related to this study. A couple of them are presented in

this part. The first study was conducted by Jamal (2019) at SMA 5 Kendari. It revealed that students indicated positive perceptions of writing activities on Facebook group in terms of increasing writing skills and enhancing motivation in writing. The last study was conducted by Friatin (2019) at SMAN 2 Ciamis. It showed that students had positive perceptions on teaching writing through Facebook group because it improved their writing skills and increased their motivation. From the facts above, it is known that writing activity on Facebook group is positively perceived by students.

A preliminary study through the informal interview conducted with one of the English teachers who has utilized Facebook group in teaching writing at SMA Nurul Amal Palembang. The result of the interview revealed a couple of reasons why the teacher utilized Facebook group in teaching writing apart from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, it could promote interaction between teacher-students and among students. Lastly, it could encourage the students to be more active during writing activities. Therefore, Facebook group was selected to facilitate writing activities (D.A, personal communication, August 30th, 2021).

Regarding to this, it was necessary to investigate the students' perceptions as well in order to compare and contrast with what the teacher had perceived on the use of Facebook group in writing activities. Furthermore, students' perceptions were also necessary to be investigated in order to find out whether they have positive or negative perceptions on it.

As a result, this phenomenon encouraged the researcher to conduct a research about students' perceptions on the use of Facebook group in writing activities. This research aimed to find out the student's perceptions on the use of Facebook in writing activities. Then, this research was conducted at SMA Nurul Amal Palembang based on the preliminary study. In the preliminary study, it was known that the teacher utilized Facebook group for teaching writing. Thus, it was necessary to explore how the students perceived the use of Facebook group in writing activities. Therefore, this research was entitled "Students' Perceptions on the Use of Facebook Group in Writing Activities".

2. Method

The design of this study was qualitative research in the form of a case study. According to Palmer and Bolderson (2006), qualitative research attempts to gain insight into the specific meanings and behaviors experienced in certain social phenomena through the subjective experiences of the participants. Moreover,

Creswell (2012) stated that a case study enables the researchers to understand, explore and investigate a case or phenomenon happening and gain information from it. In summary, a qualitative research with a case study design was the form of this research in order to find out deep information concerning students' perceptions on the use of Facebook group in writing activities.

The participants of this study were selected from the eleventh grades at SMA Nurul Amal Palembang by purposeful sampling technique. There is one of three English teachers at SMA Nurul Amal Palembang who has utilized Facebook group in teaching writing. There are only two classes for eleventh grade at the school. The teacher teaches both natural science class (XI IPA) and social science class (XI IPS). Thus, two eleventh grade students of IPA and two eleventh grade students of IPS, totally four students were selected to be the participants of this study by using maximum variation sampling technique. The criteria of selecting the participants based on the highest scores and lowest scores of each student from both classes. Therefore, one student who has the highest score and one student who has the lowest score of each class, totally four students were selected to be the participants of this study.

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3. Results and Discussion

The research findings were related to the students' perceptions on the use of Facebook group in writing activities at SMA Nurul Amal Palembang showed that writing activities on Facebook group bring major benefits and drawbacks. The data obtained from interviewing two eleventh grade students of natural science class and two eleventh grade students of social science class were analyzed by using thematic analysis as described follows.

Table 1. Codes and Themes of Students' perceptions on the use of Facebook group in writing activities

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
Facebook group assisted the students in the process of writing	a. Planning	- The majority of the students claimed that the teacher's explanation before writing on Facebook group helped them to understand the topic of writing and select ideas for their writing.
	b. Drafting	- Most of the students explained that the teacher's explanation before writing on Facebook group helped them to make and finish their draft of writing.
	c. Final Version	- The students confessed that Facebook group made their writing read and or commented by the readers.
Facebook group facilitated the students to practice the components of writing	a. Organization	- Almost all of the students assumed that the teacher's explanation before writing on Facebook group helped them to organize sentences and paragraphs of their writing.
	b. Content	- Most of the students asserted that the teacher's explanation before writing on Facebook group helped them to find the contents for their writing.
	c. Spelling	- The students revealed that Facebook group improved their ability in using spelling.
	d. Vocabulary	- The students stated that the teacher's and classmates' comments on their writing on Facebook group increased their vocabulary.
	e. Grammar	- The students mentioned that the teacher's and classmates' comments regarding grammar on their writing on Facebook group improved their grammar.
Facebook group encouraged students' participation	-	- The majority of the students affirmed that classmates' likes and comments on their writing on Facebook group encouraged their participation.
Facebook group boosted students' motivation and confidence to write	-	- Most of the students asserted that likes and comments of their teacher and classmates increased their motivation and confidence to write on

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
Facebook group was easy to access because of steady internet connection	-	Facebook group. - The students claimed that internet connection remained stable during writing activities on Facebook group.
Facebook group did not promote editing process of writing	-	- The students asserted that they did not edit their draft of writing and they just posted it on Facebook group after they finished writing.
Facebook group did not assist the students in using capitalization and punctuation	-	- The students pointed out that they made mistakes in capital letters and punctuation during writing activities on Facebook group.
The students got distracted by other features of Facebook	-	- The students stated that they tended to watch videos on Facebook during writing activities on Facebook group.
The students received slow feedbacks for their writing from the teacher and classmates	-	- The students explained that they had to wait quite a while for getting feedbacks or comments from the teacher and classmates on their writing.

After analyzing the data of the interviews with the participants, the researcher found that use of Facebook group in writing activities at SMA Nurul Amal Palembang brought several benefits and drawbacks as described follows.

The first perception revealed that the use of Facebook group in writing activities assisted the students in the process of writing. These processes of writing covered planning, drafting, and final version. First of all, the use of Facebook group in writing activities aided the students in planning phase of writing in which the teacher's explanation before the actual writing assisted them in understanding the topic of writing and selecting the writing ideas. According to a research by Alotumi (2015), the use of Facebook group in writing pre-task was beneficial to assist the students when writing essays in terms of getting familiar with the topic of writing and getting better ideas. Moreover, a research by Al-Adl (2017) demonstrated that Facebook group managed the students in their technical writing skills in which it assisted them in getting tips of how to write according to the topic before the actual writing. In essence, the use of Facebook group in writing activities assisted the students in planning phase of writing in terms of getting familiar the topic of writing and selecting writing ideas.

In addition, the use of Facebook group in writing activities assisted the students in drafting process. The students elaborated that the teacher's explanation before writing activity aided them in making and finishing their draft of writing. A research by Andini (2019) showed that after participating on Facebook group discussion, completing writing became easier for the students. Afterwards, a research by Bani-Hani et al. (2014) found that the use of Facebook group facilitated the students to accomplish their writing assignments. In a word, Facebook group aided the students in completing their draft of writing.

Moreover, the use of Facebook group in writing activities also supported the students in final version of writing in which their writing could be sent to and read by the readers. Trinadiah et al. (2015) pointed out that Facebook is a helpful medium that can be used by the teacher to teach writing because it provides the opportunity for the teacher to ask the students to post their writing on the group and get some comments from their classmates. Moreover, Ramadhani (2018) stated that Facebook provided various features, such as Facebook comments where the students could comment on each other's writing. In conclusion, Facebook group helped the students in order their writing could be read and commented by the readers.

The second perception showed that the use of Facebook group in writing activities facilitated the students to practice the components of writing. The components include organization, content, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar. First of all, the use of Facebook group in writing activities assisted the students in writing organization because the students claimed that the teacher's explanation on Facebook group before the actual writing aided them in organizing sentences and paragraphs of their writing. According to a research by Hamidah and Yanuarmawan (2017), a group discussion on Facebook group helped the students complete paragraphs organization of their writing in order to be posted on the group and evaluated by the teacher. Afterwards, Shih (2011, as cited in Kamnoetsin, 2014) claimed that one of the opportunities provided for English learners who participate in writing class on Facebook is to practice the organization of writing. To sum up, the use of Facebook group in writing activities assisted the student in writing organization.

The implementation of Facebook group in writing activities had such a benefit on contents of writing. The students claimed that the teacher's explanation before writing activity assisted them in finding contents for their writing. In compliance with a research by Shih (2011, as cited in Ahmed, 2016), one benefit that students got after receiving Facebook integrated blended

learning was that they were able to improve their content of writing. Moreover, a research by Shukor (2015) revealed that brainstorming process on Facebook could beneficially improve the content of students' writing. In short, Facebook group assisted the students in getting contents of writing.

Another benefit of utilizing Facebook group in writing activities was that it assisted the students in using spelling while writing. Based on a research by Annamalai (2016) students' interaction with their friends and teacher helped them in using spelling, punctuation, and capitalization writing activity on Facebook group. Subsequently, a research by Jamal (2019) discovered that students were able to avoid the spelling error in writing because of spell check feature of Facebook group. Essentially, Facebook group facilitated the students in spelling words correctly during writing activity.

The use Facebook group in writing activities also had significant improvement on students' vocabulary in which it increased students' vocabulary from reading their classmates' comments on their writing. According to Mukhlif and Challob (2021), Facebook provides the opportunity for the students to acquire new vocabularies and always practice those vocabularies with their friends on Facebook. Furthermore, a research by Kabilan and Zahar (2016) found that Facebook promoted the students to find and learn new words, discover the meanings of new words, and use those words learned from Facebook. In a word, the use of Facebook group in writing activities beneficially enhanced students' vocabulary.

The last but not least, the use of Facebook group in writing activities had such a benefit on students' grammar in which the teacher's and classmates' comments concerning grammar on their writing made the students familiar with grammar. In line with this, a research by Sabaruddin (2019) demonstrated that the utilization of Facebook in teaching writing enhanced students' grammar understanding in that they could provide feedback regarding grammar errors noticed in their writing. The students perceived that the classmates' and the teacher's comments on their writing improved their grammar. Moreover, a research by Prasobdee (2021) discovered that the use of peer feedback Facebook approach was beneficial to improve students' writing because it corrected their mistakes in writing and offered helpful suggestions, and they thereby became more familiar with grammar. In summary, the utilization of Facebook group in writing activities enhanced students' grammar.

The third perception informed that the use of Facebook group had beneficial contribution on students' participation in which the classmate's likes and

comments on their writing encourage them to participate during writing activities on Facebook group. Mukhtar (2019) mentioned that the use of social media like Facebook groups provides the opportunity for students to express themselves as they feel comfortable utilizing it, then it encourages them to participate in teaching and learning process. Besides, Camus et al. (2016, as cited in Ulla & Perales, 2021) stated that the effects of using Facebook as an online teaching tool were beneficial to foster students' participation and encourage the interaction among them. Briefly, Facebook group urged students' participation in writing activities.

The fourth perception told that Facebook group beneficially increased students' motivation and confidence to write because of the teacher's and classmates' likes and comments on their writing. A research by White (2020) demonstrated students became more motivated in terms of joining class discussion and offering their thoughts. Furthermore, a research by Faryadi (2017) found that Facebook was very satisfying for learning English language and increased English language learners' confidence as it could be observed from their gestures, engagement, and excitement in the classroom. In essence, writing activities on Facebook group boosted students' motivation and confidence.

The fifth perception disclosed that Facebook group was easy for the students to access because of steady internet connection. This finding was not in line with the statement from Yunus and Salehi (2012) who stated that students might have problem with internet connection during writing activities on Facebook group. Afterwards, this was not also in line with the statement from Sholah (2016) who mentioned that the problem that might occur in utilizing Facebook group for learning is bad internet connection which can impede online learning activities. In brief, it was known that stable internet connection facilitated the students to access Facebook group in writing activities.

The sixth perception pointed out that Facebook group did not promote editing process of writing. This finding was not in line with a research by Ramadhani (2018) which demonstrated that friends' comments on their writing enabled the students to edit their writing. Furthermore, it was not also in line with a research by Suwartono (2021) which revealed that friends' comments and suggestions on their writing assisted the students to edit and complete their essays. In brief, it was found that Facebook group did not provide the students the opportunity to edit their draft of writing.

The seventh perception revealed that Facebook group did not assist the students in using capitalization and punctuation because they still made mistakes in using them while writing. This was not in line with a

research by Annamalai (2016) which demonstrated that students' interaction with their friends and teacher helped them in using spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Moreover, the finding was not also in line with a research by Al-Haj (2015) which revealed that friends' feedbacks was effective to assist the students in improving paragraph writing skills and using punctuation during writing on Facebook. It is concluded that Facebook group did not facilitate the students to use capitalization and punctuation in writing correctly.

The seventh perception showed that the students got distracted by features of Facebook. The students affirmed that they tended to watch videos on Facebook during writing activities on Facebook group. According to Yunus and Salehi (2012), the main challenge of writing activities on Facebook group that teachers need to take care of is the distraction by features of Facebook, such as videos, chats, games, and others. Afterwards, Amirza (2021) mentioned that the students should be initially alarmed regarding other features of Facebook because they could distract students' attention from finishing their writing on Facebook group. Therefore, features of Facebook group could impede the student during writing activities on Facebook group.

The last perception informed that the students received slow feedbacks for their writing from the teacher and classmates on Facebook group. In compliance with Yunus and Salehi (2012), the disadvantages of utilizing ICT like Facebook in language teaching include the absence of direct interaction and immediate feedback. Furthermore, Littlefield (2018, as cited in Dhawan, 2020) affirmed that online learning did not promote instant feedback and immediate response for the students. Thus, Facebook group did not facilitate the students to receive immediate feedbacks for their writing.

4. Conclusion

Based on the result of data analyzed by using thematic analysis, it was found that the use of Facebook group in writing activities at SMA Nurul Amal Palembang brought benefits and drawbacks as perceived by the students. The benefits included (1) Facebook group assisted the students in the process of writing which covered planning, drafting and final version, (2) Facebook group facilitated the students to practice the components of writing which encompassed organization, content, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar, (3) Facebook group encouraged students' participation, (4) Facebook group boosted students' motivation and confidence to write, and (5) Facebook group was easy to access because of steady internet connection. Nevertheless, writing activities on Facebook

group also brought a few drawbacks, such as (1) Facebook group did not promote editing process of writing, (2) Facebook group did not assist the student in using capital letters and punctuation, (3) the students got distracted by other features of Facebook, and (4) the students received slow feedbacks from the teacher and classmates.

According to the conclusion above, the researcher would like to incorporate some suggestions concerning the results of the study. Firstly, the use of Facebook group in writing activities brings several drawbacks in this study as mentioned on the previous chapter. As a means to at least minimize the drawbacks, it is suggested for the teacher to come up with additional activities, such as providing editing activities in which the students can revise their draft of writing before posting it on Facebook group. Afterward, it is necessary for the teacher to ensure that the students participate and do not get distracted by other features of Facebook during writing activities by providing attractive activities before the actual writing in order to keep their participation in the activities. Moreover, it is also necessary for the teacher to provide immediate feedbacks or comments on the students' writing in order to encounter the drawback and optimize the learning activity. It is hoped by implementing these activities, the drawbacks of utilizing Facebook group in writing activities can be managed well.

Lastly, this study was aimed to find out the students' perceptions on the use of Facebook group in writing activities. In order to fill the gap of this study, it is suggested for future researchers to discover the teacher's perceptions as well. Therefore, perceptions from different individuals can thoroughly be learned. Furthermore, it is also suggested to those who want to conduct the same study as the researchers to select more participants for their studies. It is expected that by selecting more participants, various perceptions of individuals concerning the issue can be obtained.

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