
Research Article

Learning to Write in English: EFL Students' Perceptions of Using the Wattpad as Digital Literacy in Writing Classes

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Abstract

The existence of an online reading and writing application namely Wattpad becomes a space for students to read and write which already has many users, especially students. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine students' perceptions of the use of Wattpad in the development of writing skills especially in narrative text. This research was designed by a survey and supported by semi-structured interviews of 200 English students who use Wattpad for approximately one month-six months. Then four students were interviewed which, respectively, both had positive and negative perceptions. The results were that most of the students have positive perceptions of Wattpad and had great potential in developing students' interests and writing skills. By using this application, students feel happy and enjoy exploring their writing. Therefore, Wattpad is recommended for teachers in learning because Wattpad can make independent learning for students in their writing.

Keywords

Students' perceptions; wattpad; digital literacy; writing skill

Introduction

Digital literacy is an essential concept that needs to be recognized and developed in education. According to Bawden (2018), digital literacy is considered "an essential requirement for life in the digital age" because it has interested a lot of scholars to conduct various studies of students' evaluation of their literacy (Zhang & Zhu, 2016), as well as the utilization of digital tools in their learning. People can get and look for the information, especially students, and teachers can also learn and teach literacy using digital. Another overview of Digital Literacy according to Twing (2013), it can become a person's skill space effectively in the 21st century, including understanding the characteristics, digital features, and how to manage digital literacy. Thus, digital literacy is needed for teachers to conform to



students' digital inclinations and necessities in their learning. Based on several studies, discussed the use of Wattpad through students in and out of school activities. Because sometimes, learning in the classroom makes students feel uncomfortable when writing in the school atmosphere and pressure from the teacher. So, learning through this technology can help students write outside of school without any pressure from anyone. Even so, students must have supervision from their parents.

In teaching English language skills, writing was a product skill that was hard to learn and the most complicated language skill for students, because writing combined with components that were considered such as the structure of grammar, had a great and clear understandable idea, vocabulary, and structural writing. Thus, students have to learn a basic knowledge of the schematic structure and linguistic features to start their writing. Because good writing was done from a structural-words and it is easy to understand by the readers. The existence of an application called Wattpad makes space for the world of literacy. Wattpad is a platform for reading and writing a story with free access and this platform aims to create a reading community, as well as remove barriers between readers and writers. It was created by Allen Lau dan Ivan Yuen, in December 2006. According to Aytan (2017), Wattpad can provide an opportunity for short story, novel, and non-fiction writers to publish their works. And it would give a chance to many users, especially young talented students who like to write and explore their talents because Wattpad is free and easy to use. Using Wattpad media for a writing activity, could be used to increase students' motivation in writing and make them feel fun and also meaningful based on students' desires.

Thus, the writers must have the ability to use vocabulary, grammar, and language structure. The writing problems of EFL students are often in writing steps, exploring ideas, and directed paragraph writing, and it made students easy to feel stressed and bored because this activity was difficult to learn (Rahmatunisa, 2014; Rao, 2007; Zhu, 2001; Hamed, 2014; Setyowati, Sukmawa, & Latief, 2017; Widiati & Cahyono, 2006; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022). Internet technology makes it easier to help students' activities because they practice their writing skills using blogging or digital media (Ocker & Yeverbaum, 2001; Pena-Shaff, Altman, & Stephenson, 2005; Zeiss & Isabella, 2005; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022). So, the existence of digital literacy helped literacy development because it has a relationship to make it easier to access. According to the theoretical framework, Wattpad is a platform or website for literacy of reading and writing that gives new possibilities for enriching the literacy experience. Wattpad is a free digital environment that gives feedback from other Wattpad users (Ramdarshan Bold, 2018).

A literature review of writing skills on the use of digital literacy as blogs, websites, etc. Showed if it contributed to solving students' writing problems. Whether it's from the results of the pretest, as well as experimental research design, case study, or phenomenology study on the use of digital media in learning. Many studies have been conducted on the habits of students who use Wattpad to develop their literacy, especially in writing skills. According to Mazhar Bal (2018), students have different experiences between writing in school and writing on the Wattpad application, then a survey was conducted for students and they agreed that Wattpad could develop their English skills in general. There is also a study that observed students' recount text writing using Wattpad with an observation sheet design and the results show that Wattpad increased the students' learning, as well as students have better motivation in learning writing of recount text (Isti Rokha, 2019). A phenomenal study has been carried out to see the potential of Wattpad on students' literature understanding and it showed the results that Wattpad has great potential in providing better engagement in reaching literary competence. This study also observed teachers' perception of the use of Wattpad, so most of the lectures said that Wattpad is a friendly digital for the students learning environment, because Wattpad has fun features and Wattpad to support student's literary competence achievement (Janata Shoji, 2021; Falaq, 2021). Previously, Wattpad also provides benefits for extensive reading through students' perception which shows that they enjoy reading on Wattpad and they agree that Wattpad helped their



English skills (Permatasari et al., 2020). Difficulties in writing skills often occur in exploring students' ideas and in a study showed that the Wattpad application is easier for imaging readers and gives the idea that it has to improve more (Ulfa, t.t. 2018). Thus, there have been many previous studies that have examined Wattpad on students' literacy such as Wattpad's potential in literacy, extensive reading, and writing a recount text.

From previous studies, there is still no focus on students' perception of Wattpad for writing skills in narrative text. Therefore, the researcher limits the research problem by only focusing on students' ability to write narrative texts. This research was conducted to find out students' perceptions about using Wattpad in their writing skills which will be adjusted to three component aspects according to Walgito (2010), the first component is the cognitive component which is students' knowledge or opinions about writing abilities and the Wattpad platform for writing. The second is the affective component which expresses students' feelings or emotions while using the Wattpad application as a writing space outside of school. The last is the conative component which explains the students' actions at the beginning of using Wattpad until they decide to make Wattpad an alternative writing media outside of school. The research on student perceptions will provide a reference material for student's perception of the use of the Wattpad application, so can provide new alternative learning media for students in pouring it into students can introduce Wattpad as a writing application, extending the literature on students' system belief using Wattpad media. Then, two questions have to answer:

1. What are the students' perceptions of using Wattpad in their writing classes?
2. Based on their perceptions, how do Wattpad help them in learning to write?

Method

This research employed a qualitative. Qualitative research was a participatory worldview through research participants and open-ended interviewing. For this study, the researcher seeks to examine the research problems which were the oppression of individuals (Creswell, 2013). The researcher aimed to understand the students' meaning of their experiences and assumed the use of Wattpad to create their meanings as they interact with this application. Basic qualitative studies can use interview or focus group techniques. In this research instrument, by following the three component aspects adopted by Walgito (2010), The following are the component aspects that researchers use: Cognitive component, Affective component, and Conative component. There were two instruments used in this study; a questionnaire which had two items of yes and no and an interview.

The participants of this study were 200 English students who studied English as a foreign language from class 8th and 9th grades. In addition, participants must meet the criteria set by the researchers, namely; they have used Wattpad for approximately one month-six months and students also have many reading drafts. To find out if the student criteria were appropriate, the researcher created an online group that had been provided and students were asked to send several draft files of their writing.

The data collection in this study was done in several steps. First, after the researcher collected fifteen students who fit the criteria into an online group, students were distributed questionnaires via a Google form that had been translated into Indonesian to make it easier for students to choose questionnaire items. After filling out the questionnaire, four students were interviewed, respectively, both had positive and negative perceptions to be structurally interviewed. In each of the three components aspects, two questions that must be answered by students to get more descriptive of the questionnaire that has been distributed and to help explain the results of the percentages of the data.

Data analysis involves the results of research instruments by reducing and organizing data, looking for significant patterns and important discoveries and discoveries. Therefore, the researchers must be able



to manage the results of the instrument, then understand it to explain and develop it into a theory or ask new questions. Because the data analysis often occurs, qualitative data analysis is explained through stagnant stages.

Results

The findings from this study are detailed into three themes adopted by Walgito (2010). Thus, this study extends the previous work.

Cognitive Component

In this component, the researchers asked students about their knowledge, opinions of writing skills, and Wattpad for writing.

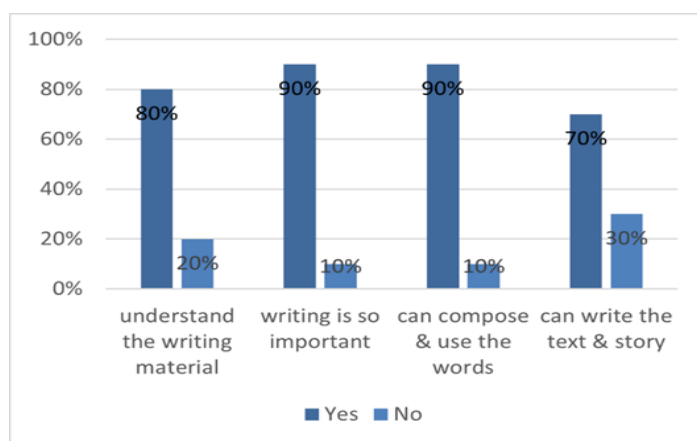


Figure 1. Cognitive component

For the Cognitive component according to figure 1 which showed that students had a good perception of Wattpad knowledge from; understanding the writing material= 80%, can write the text and story=70%, and compose and use the words=90% when using the Wattpad for more than one month-six months. And it is supported by the deep interview of students 1 and 2 who have positive perception. Student 1 was saying, *“By writing, we can create inspiration to others and we can make good writing, and I thought that Wattpad is a good platform for improving student writing skills and we can make our writings read by many people.”* This expression showed that Wattpad was a good platform to read and write. Likewise with the response from student 2, *“Writing skills are needed for being easy to understand and nice to read, therefore the readers can understand what the author means. Wattpad is an easy and best platform to access by students and Wattpad helps new writers to explore their writing to many users.”* With the answers to this interview, they stated that Wattpad has easy access to use in literacy. The learners want to create their inspiration but they have to make good writing by Wattpad because their writing can be read by many people and they get feedback on their writing.

Meanwhile, Wattpad is easy to access and flexible to use by students, and it is followed by students 3 and 4 who had a negative perception of Wattpad. Student 3 said, *“For me, Wattpad is still lacking for writing media, because of the lack of writing creation there, or because it is monotonous.”* And it has a similar point of view from student 4 that, *“I disagree. Because Wattpad is an application that is so useful to develop writing talents in the electronic world, where students will take a lot of time to use electronic objects, and make many teenagers and other youths like to stay at home to write/read Wattpad and the lack of socialization to the surrounding community.”* From 30% of students' negative perceptions, it has been concluded that Wattpad is too monotonous and dangerous to the social life of

students because of using Wattpad in gadgets. And students 3 & 4 disagree with the less creative content of Wattpad.

Affective Component

In this component, the researchers asked about the students' emotions or their feelings about using Wattpad in their writing skills.

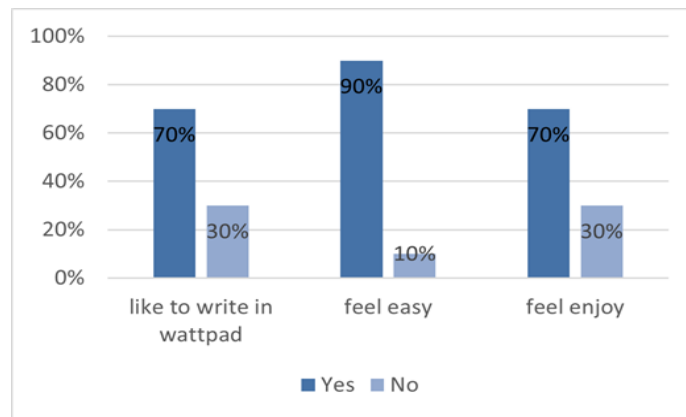


Figure 2. Affective component

Figure 2 showed that most of the students like to write in Wattpad application =70%, because writing on Wattpad makes them feel easy=90% and they feel enjoyment=70%. This result was supported by deep interviews of student 1 and student 2 who have positive perceptions. In this aspect, Student 1 said, *“I feel so happy to write in Wattpad because I can explore my interest and writing ability there. And last, I can explore my inspiration there.”* It showed that student agree if Wattpad makes them enjoy and interest to write, and this answer was supported by student 2, *“I feel enjoy because I can write something that I want and I can without following people’s favorite and without coercion.”* Student 2 added if writing in Wattpad application makes it easier for students to explore their inspiration without coercion from other people and students enjoy it because they have a pretty good atmosphere for writing, considering that Wattpad is a very flexible application with various features so that students feel comfortable while writing.

In-depth interviews from students 3 and student 4 showed the negative perception. Student 3 said, *“Not comfortable for eyes and has bad features for writing.”* And student 4 also said, *“When I write on Wattpad, it’s normal, but over time I feel bored to write on Wattpad, it’s very different from when I wrote in a book.”* But sometimes, Wattpad also has a weakness for health, especially for the eyes, because students will spend time on the cellphone screen and it is so dangerous. According to students 3 and 4, they feel very bored when writing on Wattpad because they are not as comfortable as writing in books.

Conative Component

In the last component, the researcher asked about students' actions on this Wattpad application and the way of Wattpad in improving their writing skills.

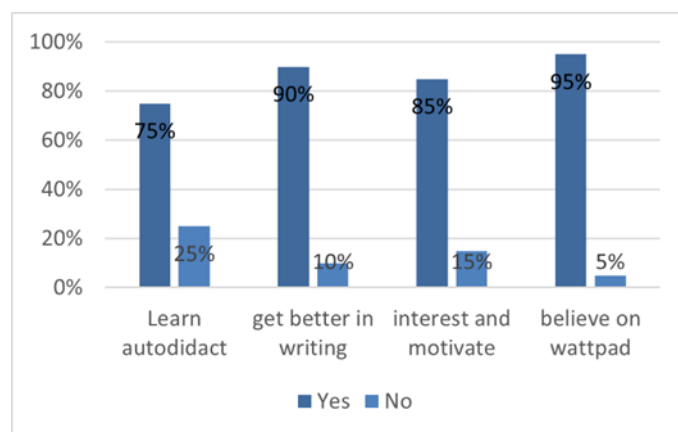


Figure 3. Conative component

In-depth interviews of the conative aspect from Student 1 shared that, *“I got advice from google because I want to read a story. Then I downloaded the app and started reading a few stories for a week. After that I have the inspiration to write from the many stories I read. Then I learned to write asynchronously and autodidact.”* Student 2 also said, *“I heard about this application from my cousin when she posted a story that I was interested in Wattpad. So, I started to read the story and I found inspiration for that story to be a writer, because being a writer didn’t involve a lot of people. Then I write something just for myself. And yes. I’m getting better at writing by myself as well as autodidact.”* For the conative components, according to the table.3 it’s enough to answer how Wattpad helped students in their writing classes. From the table it showed that 75% of students would agree if they learned autodidact because Wattpad was so fun and made them enjoy writing. It was supported by the interview of students 1 and 2 who said they learned to write because they were inspired by the writings of other users. Therefore, students change their writing style and compose the words as well as possible. Most of the students started as readers then they began to write there. So Wattpad can also develop students through self-directed learning.

For the student who has negative perceptions, student 3 said, *“I learned about Wattpad from my classmate, so I tried to learn more about it. Wattpad is not appropriate because the content in it is too dangerous for students. because some readings contain violence or bad attitudes. That’s why I left it.”* Student 4 also added, *“First time I knew Wattpad was from my cousin, who thought that Wattpad was a good application for reading and writing, then I tried it. But all this time, I felt if I spent my time on Wattpad and made me late in submitting my assignment.”* However, for the content of Wattpad readings, the age limit must be maintained, according to students 3 and 4 who said that they were not comfortable on Wattpad because some content contained violence, bad attitudes, and bad language. And they also felt lazy in doing and submitting the assignment because they spent a lot of time on Wattpad, then it can affect students.

Discussion

The result of this study showed students’ perception of using Wattpad for more than six months which had started as readers so the students were interested and inspired to write. Wattpad is important for writing skills because students developed their writing skills through independent learning and autodidact by inspiring other users’ writing.

Wattpad had a big potential in writing because students had higher motivation and were interested in writing happily and enjoyed feelings when using this application. This application can be an alternative media for students’ learning and Wattpad contributed to exploring their ideas (Isti Rokha. 2019, Mazhar. Bal.2018, Janata. Shoji. 2020, Tati. L. D. 2018, Ulfa. Shelma. 2018). The difference

from the previous study showed that students learned independence and autodidact outside the school by using the Wattpad, and it was supported by students' perception. The impact was making it easier for teachers to develop students' writing skills in this digital literacy era.

This study divided into three results according to the components. Firstly, the cognitive component; students think that Wattpad can be a reading and writing platform outside of school because it can broadly develop student inspiration because Wattpad can be accessed easily for new users, there are also many features. Secondly, the affective component; Students feel happy and enjoy using Wattpad because so far students have felt uncomfortable with situations that pressure them, such as writing continuously at school. Third, the conative component; some students who started writing on Wattpad started as readers and then they had an interest in writing a short story there, this was also supported by in-depth interview answers, namely students chose to study independently by looking for references from the stories they had read, for example, looking at the writing style, how to arrange sentence by sentence so that it is easy for readers to understand, and how to write with good and correct grammar.

From the data analysis of this study, it shows that most students agree that Wattpad has helped students learn to write independently outside the school. They feel happy and comfortable when writing on Wattpad because they can explore their ideas freely. However, 40% of students disagree because of the negative sides of using Wattpad such as being lazy to do assignments, easier to feel bored, Wattpad has a bad effect on eye health because students spend their time on the phone screen, sometimes Wattpad has bad content like a violence, and sexuality.²

The research questions have been answered; 1) What are the students' perceptions on the use of Wattpad in their writing? Most students have a positive perception and support this application for learning media to write. 2) How Wattpad helps the students in their learning to write? Wattpad has a big role in the students' writing skill because using a Wattpad can be an independent learning for students and autodidact out of the school in their writing. The implication of using Wattpad can help the teacher in learning to write because students learn by independent and autodidact, Wattpad can be the alternative learning in students' writing, and Wattpad also makes the teacher easier for developing students' writing skill in this digital literacy era. But there was the limitation that 40% of students feel bored and lazy to do their assignment when using Wattpad, and when spent their time on the cellphone screen it was easier damaging the eyes health. Wattpad also has bad contents like a violence, bad language, and distractions for their life socialization.

Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion, there are several points from these three components. First, in the cognitive component, students argue that Wattpad has an important role in literacy, especially writing because it can produce inspirations to develop in writing. Second, the affective Component shows that with comfortable and convenient features, students feel happy and happy when writing because writing also requires comfort to overcome a writer's block. Third, the cognitive component of students' perceptions shows that students can be independent learning, because they started as readers so they are interested in writing, students start writing and finally they get feedback on their writing from other users. Otherwise, students also learn to improve their writing by looking at or looking for written references that suit their individual tastes. So that students can easily explore ideas, compose sentences, use words, and produce writings that are easily understood by readers.

Students have positive perceptions and Wattpad can be the alternative media in writing classes. Based on the students' perceptions, the way Wattpad helped students was beginning as readers, and they became interested in writing. The suggestion of this research is that the teacher has to use and develop Wattpad because it makes students learn as autodidact in their writing skill, but to solve the



implication, teachers have to control and facilitate the using Wattpad application as alternative media in learning to write.

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