Students Difficulties Using Webtoon Applications in Teaching Writing Skills: at Eight Grade SMPN 1 Klampis

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the difficulties experienced by grade VIII students in using webtoon apps to teach writing skills, as well as formulate effective learning strategies to overcome these difficulties. Qualitative research methodology was used, utilizing interviews, observations, and surveys to gather detailed insights from students at SMPN 1 Klampis. The results showed that students enjoy Webtoon apps but often experience difficulties such as generating ideas and organizing their writing effectively. Many students expressed feelings of frustration and anxiety when faced with writing tasks, which affected their overall motivation. These findings highlight the need for instructional strategies that can address these specific challenges. In conclusion, although Webtoon apps have the potential to improve writing skills, targeted support is essential to overcome the identified difficulties. Recommendations include providing structured guidance and focused writing exercises. In addition, training for teachers on how to effectively implement Webtoon in the classroom could further assist students in overcoming their writing challenges.

Keywords: Students' difficulties; Webtoon application; Teaching Writing

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan yang dialami oleh siswa kelas VIII dalam menggunakan aplikasi webtoon dalam pengajaran keterampilan menulis, serta merumuskan strategi pembelajaran yang efektif untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut. Metodologi penelitian kualitatif digunakan, memanfaatkan wawancara, observasi, dan survei untuk mengumpulkan wawasan rinci dari siswa di SMPN 1 Klampis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa menikmati aplikasi Webtoon tetapi sering mengalami kesulitan seperti menghasilkan ide dan mengatur tulisan mereka secara efektif. Banyak siswa mengungkapkan perasaan frustrasi dan kecemasan ketika dihadapkan dengan tugas menulis, yang mempengaruhi motivasi mereka secara keseluruhan. Temuan ini menyoroti perlunya strategi instruksional yang dapat mengatasi tantangan-tantangan spesifik ini. Kesimpulannya, meskipun aplikasi Webtoon memiliki potensi dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis, dukungan yang ditargetkan sangat penting untuk mengatasi kesulitan-kesulitan yang teridentifikasi. Rekomendasi yang diberikan termasuk memberikan bimbingan terstruktur dan latihan menulis yang terfokus. Selain itu, pelatihan untuk guru tentang cara menerapkan Webtoon secara efektif di kelas dapat membantu siswa lebih lanjut dalam mengatasi tantangan menulis mereka.

Kata Kunci: Kesulitan siswa; Aplikasi Webtoo; pembelaran menulis

INTRODUCTION

One often feels compelled to write but is unable to complete it. A person has difficulty writing because he/she has difficulty expressing his/her thoughts or ideas in good and correct English. One of the aptitudes that understudies loathe is composing. The first is the subject. Students must create a written work with a predetermined theme. Teachers can overcome this by explaining the theme more

specifically before students create the text. Secondly, students need to choose the right words more; the reason is that students need to read more to have adequate vocabulary references. In this case, the teacher overcomes this by using educational applications that have a lot of vocabulary, such as webtoon applications. Third, students need to be more interested in reading in written form (Kiptiyah et al., 2022).

To produce good writing, the writer must first pay attention. Good Writing can implicate good ideas and thoughts from the writer. (Sa'adah, 2020). For example, in teaching descriptive text writing, the teacher uses the explanation presented and uses PowerPoint as media. The teacher explains the basics of writing descriptive texts because, according to the teacher, students still need to understand the meaning, generic structure, and characteristics of explanatory texts. However, this medium is still less attractive to students. The other way the teacher does this is by using the Webtoon application (Sa'adah, 2020).The teacher tells how to use the Webtoon application in writing skills. The teacher guides students in installing the Webtoon application and registering an account. The teacher uses the English version to teach students how to write descriptions.

In today's digital era, innovation in learning methods is needed to increase students' interest and competence, especially in writing skills. One innovation that has been introduced is the use of the Webtoon application, which is a digital comic-based platform. (Aulia, 2022). Webtoons are a form of digital comics. Webtoon is an application that contains comics published online that can be accessed by readers whenever they want (Kristiani, 2022). Usually, comics are published through print or paper media, but it is different from comics. (Susanti et al., 2023). In addition, webtoons have characteristics that cannot be found in Webcomics in other countries, such as voice features that can be added by webtoon comic artists. Since webtoons are very popular among teenagers today, they can be used as learning media for teachers (Marsita & Hasanudin, 2022). Webtoon helps them improve their writing skills. The app has hundreds of comics with various stories, genres, and art styles (Gultom & Sidabalok, 2024). Serialized image-based media, such as comic strips or Webtoons, can provide a lot of interest, including in teaching writing. Serialized images can be used in teaching writing. At first, this media can encourage students to focus during the learning process. The images can also serve as a stimulus and source of information for students to write. Students will find the fun element of the Webtoon app appealing as it facilitates learning while playing. Therefore, this can increase students' learning motivation. In addition, the Webtoon program is free, so anyone can use it without paying anything. Webtoon apps are also user-friendly and offer a wide variety of genres to readers. By using webtoon apps, students are more interested in participating in learning, and there are positive changes in students' participation and learning outcomes.

Several studies examine the difficulties experienced by students in using webtoons in teaching writing (Gultom & Sidabalok, 2024). Research on A Perspective Analysis of Students' Perceptions of Using Webtoons for Short Story Writing. This research shows that Webtoons are effective in motivating tenth-grade students at Xaverius High School to write short stories, with most students giving a positive view of the platform due to its interesting visual and narrative elements. However, some difficulties were also experienced by students, These include issues with device accessibility and an internet connection, loss of focus due to distraction from other

content, and a lack of confidence in their writing ability that hinders them from turning inspiration from Webtoon into a coherent piece of writing (Safrina, 2021).

Based on the above background, to answer these problems, research questions are formulated regarding the use of webtoon applications in teaching writing, namely, How are students' difficulties in using webtoon applications for learning writing in class VIII SMPN 1 Klampis.

RESEARCH METHOD

To examine the problems that occur, researchers use qualitative research methods. The approach used is descriptive qualitative. This approach is intended to describe existing phenomena, both natural and human engineering, which pay more attention to the characteristics, quality, and interrelationships between activities. (Safrudin et al., 2023). The location of this research is SMPN 1 Klampis, and the target is eighth-grade students. In this school, students often experience difficulties in writing skills, such as a lack of ideas, difficulty composing sentences, and low motivation to write. This makes many students feel frustrated and lazy to practice writing. To overcome these difficulties, the teacher chose the Webtoon application as an innovative learning medium. (Nasrullah, 2023). With interesting visual content and creative stories, Webtoon can stimulate students' imagination and help them develop ideas for their writing. Through the use of Webtoon, it is hoped that students can learn how to organize narratives better, understand story structure, and improve their ability to express their thoughts in teaching writing. Therefore, the researcher chose descriptive qualitative research to discuss more deeply the use of the Webtoon application in teaching writing to eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Klampis. The school is located on Jl. Raya Klampis, Rice Fields/Garden Area, Bator, Bangkalan, Bangkalan Regency, East Java. The research subjects were eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Klampis. Researchers took 15 students who became research subjects, so the number of students taken by researchers was 15.

In this study, researchers used three instruments, namely field note observations, interviews, and documentation. The first instrument is field note observation, which is used to measure places, activities, and participants. This instrument involves a) how VIII grade students of SMPN 1 Klampis apply the webtoon application to the application of writing skills, which includes the content contained in writing skills, vocabulary, grammar, and also the mechanisms that exist in writing skills that adjust to their tasks and functions, then 2) whether students look for stories on existing topics to pour into writing, and also 3) whether after doing all these things each student will present the results of his writing in front of the teacher. The second instrument is the interview. The second instrument is the interview. The researcher used semi-structured interviews as one of the categories of in-depth interviews, which are conducted more freely than structured interviews. a) What aspects of the story in the webtoon can be applied in the writing process by students in their writing? b) What figures or stories inspire students the most from Webtoon? b) How does webtoon help students in finding ideas for writing? c) What difficulties do students face in writing when using webtoon applications? d) What do students do when they find difficulties in writing? e) How do students feel about using Webtoon as a learning media? f) Is the webtoon application interesting for students? and g) What do students get after learning to write using the webtoon application? The last instrument is documentation. This instrument

can be used as evidence that the researcher has implemented the previously mentioned techniques. The documentation procedure includes: a) the researcher obtains permission to conduct research, b) the researcher determines the object of research, and c) the researcher takes documentation in the form of photographs regarding the observation and interview process when the researcher conducts the technique, as well as lesson plans and student attendance lists.

For data analysis techniques, researchers use (Jassim & Abdulwahid, 2021) with observation techniques. In this observation activity, the researcher used two steps. The first was when the researcher explained the webtoon application, and the second was when the researcher told students to find stories on the webtoon and determine the intrinsic and extrinsic elements in the selected story. The researcher also used the theory (Jassim & Abdulwahid, 2021) The data used in the interview were questions that included student profiles, and continued with more significant questions such as the application of webtoon applications to writing skills, by using webtoon applications whether it can provide changes in writing skills, and whether using webtoon applications can help find new and good ideas in writing skills. From the two data analysis techniques chosen by the researcher, the researcher can conclude that the use of webtoon applications in writing skills can have a positive impact on students and can also be an appropriate medium for teaching writing.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

This study investigates the difficulties of students in using the Webtoon application for learning writing in class VIII SMPN 1 Klampis. By using observation field notes and interviews, the researcher will describe the answers by providing the results of the research and discussion. In this research activity, two meetings were conducted by the researcher. The activities carried out by researchers at the first meeting are described as follows:

Table 1. The Teacher Applying Webtoon Application in Teaching Writing

Activities	Description
Pre-Activity	This stage includes initial preparation to engage students before the main lesson. It consists of: 1. Greetings: The teacher welcomes the students to create a positive atmosphere. 2. Ice Breaking: Activities designed to relax students and encourage interaction among them.
Main-Activity	The core part of the lesson where students actively participate: 1. Introduction of Webtoon App: The teacher explains the app and its features. 2. Writing Skill Development: Students engage in activities aimed at improving their writing skills.
Post-Activity	The final stage focuses on reflection and evaluation of the learning experience: 1. Discussion: Students share their thoughts on the material. 2. Feedback: The teacher encourages students to express their opinions and experiences

For observation activities, at the first meeting, the researchers carried out several stages of activities, namely pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity. The first stage is pre-activity. At this stage, the researchers carried out greeting activities and also ice breaking. This aims to prepare participants to be more ready and involved in the activities to be carried out. Ice-breaking activities proved to play a role in creating a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere so that students were more confident in expressing ideas and working on writing tasks together. In addition, ice-breaking

creates a positive and supportive classroom environment that allows students to learn more effectively and enjoyably. When students feel comfortable, they are more likely to participate actively in learning, which will improve their writing skills.

The second stage is the main activity. At this stage, the researcher introduced the Webtoon application to the students. In addition, researchers also provide material to students. At this stage, the teacher explained in detail to the students the webtoon application and its use. The teacher also explained the form of a story and gave examples of how to determine the elements of a story in a webtoon. Students were very enthusiastic about participating in writing skills lessons using the Webtoon application. The third stage is post-activity. This stage is the last in observation activities. This post-activity is an evaluation of the beginning of the activity. At this stage, the teacher invites students to discuss the material that has been taught, make conclusions, and provide feedback. Students are also encouraged to express their opinions and experiences related to learning activities.

Table 2. Evaluation of the Beginning of the Activity

Steps	Statements	Yes	No	Evidence
Prewriting	Students plan what they will write based on the instructions from the Webtoon app.	✔		Students think about and look for themes to write about according to the stories in the Webtoon.
	Students choose a theme and a goal, brainstorm, and organize information.	✔		Students find a theme and decide which theme to use for writing.
Drafting	Students write down their ideas in sentences gradually according to a guide on Webtoon.	✔		Students review their writing and correct any errors or discrepancies with the content on the Webtoon.
Revising	Students revise their previous writing.	✔		Students organize words based on the theme they have chosen.
Proofreading	Students double-check their writing before submission.	✔		
Publishing	Publishing students present their writing in front of the class.		✔	Student display their writing and explain the content in front of the class.

For this observation, the researcher used five stages in the writing process. These five stages include prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing. The story chosen in the webtoon application is a story with the title "The Real Lesson," with a duration of 10-15 minutes. From the observation activity, it was found that students could use the Webtoon application to teach writers. The first stage is prewriting, in this stage, learners are encouraged to plan the narrative entitled "The Real Lesson". During this step, they begin to consider the main themes they want to express in the story. For example, students may recognize that the focus of the story is the importance of learning from mistakes and their impact on character-building. By utilizing the visual and narrative elements of the Webtoon app, they can explore creative ideas, such as creating a main character who faces failure in an exam but then finds a way to learn from the experience.

This initial step allows students to get a clear outline before starting to write. After planning, students move on to the draft writing stage. At this stage, they begin to put their thoughts into organized sentences. In the story "The Real Lesson", students

can start by introducing the main character and the situations he faces, such as the pressure to succeed in school. Next, they can describe when the character fails an exam and the feelings of disappointment that arise. Then, students can recount the main character's journey in trying to right the wrongs and learn from the experience. This process encourages them to create a clear and interesting storyline and express the character's emotions with more depth. The third stage is revision. Revising is a very important step in developing "The Real Lesson" story. After completing the first draft, students are asked to re-read their writing and assess whether the message is clear. They need to ensure that every part of the narrative supports the main theme of learning from mistakes. For example, if there are segments that are not relevant or do not contribute positively to the overall story, students should consider changing or deleting them. This process not only improves the quality of writing but also trains students to assess and analyze their work more critically.

The fourth stage is checking. Although there are challenges in the proofreading stage, such as overconfidence or fine motor constraints for some students, they need to do a final check before submitting their work. In the context of "The Real Lesson," students need to make sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors that could interfere with the reader's understanding of the story. They also need to check for clarity of flow and consistency of characters in the narrative. With support from teachers and classmates, students can feel more comfortable going through this process and improve the quality of their writing. The final stage is to publish their work by presenting the story "The Real Lesson" in front of the class. This is a time for students to share their work and showcase the creativity they have put into their writing. When delivering the presentation, students are expected to explain the gist of their story and how the main character learns from failure and finds valuable life lessons (Cynthia et al., 2022). These presentations not only help improve public speaking skills but also provide opportunities for students to discuss their ideas with classmates, receive feedback, and celebrate the achievements that have been gained in the writing learning process. Thus, the application of Webtoon apps in writing instruction not only makes the learning experience richer but also builds students' overall confidence and communication skills.

Picture 1. First Meeting, Introduction to the Webtoon App

After the introduction stage of the Webtoon application (Table 1 and Figure 1), researchers dug deeper to understand students' experiences in more detail. As a result, through a series of interviews (Table 2), some difficulties faced by the VIII grade students of SMPN 1 Klampis in the writing process using Webtoon were identified. The following is a table explaining the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Table 3. Interview of the Student Difficulties Using Webtoon Application In Teaching Writing

Question	Answer
How do vocabulary limitations affect students' ability to create engaging and in-depth Webtoon stories?	Students have difficulty describing the setting, characters, and actions in detail and constructing dialogue that reflects the characters' personalities.
What impact does student confusion have on understanding good and correct language structures on the quality of their writing?	Sentence structure and grammar errors cause sentences to be ambiguous and difficult to understand and disrupt the flow of the story, thereby reducing students' confidence in writing.
How do psychological factors such as lack of self-confidence and fear of unsatisfactory results affect students' writing process?	This can lead to writer's block, inhibit creativity, and create a negative attitude towards writing.
How does students' tendency to be overly influenced by existing Webtoon stories affect their originality and creativity?	Reliance on existing stories can hinder students' originality, innovation, and ability to develop unique characters and storylines. This emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to explore different Webtoon genres.
What are the difficulties faced by grade VIII students of SMPN 1 Klampis when using the webtoon application?	VIII students of SMPN 1 Klampis when using the webtoon application? The difficulties faced by students are unstable internet connections, lack of understanding of application features, and difficulty adapting writing formats to visual styles.
How do students assess the effectiveness of webtoon applications in improving their writing skills?	This app enhances creativity, but sometimes the focus on visuals reduces attention to the quality of the written content.
What features of the webtoon app most help or hinder students in writing?	The illustration addition feature is very helpful, while text editing is considered less intuitive.
Does the use of webtoon applications affect students' motivation in writing? If so, how?	The use of webtoons increases motivation due to the interactive and engaging format.
In the students' view, how does the experience of using webtoons compare to using traditional learning methods?	Webtoons are more interesting and creative, but traditional methods are simpler and faster for completing tasks.
What are the suggestions from students to improve the use of webtoon applications in writing learning?	Training on application usage, better internet access, and more flexible task timings are required.

Based on in-depth observations and a series of interviews conducted with grade VIII students of SMPN 1 Klampis, the researcher found that although the Webtoon application offers significant potential in teaching writing, its implementation is not without challenges. The four main difficulties identified are interrelated and affect students' experiences in the creative process. One of the most striking difficulties is the limited vocabulary possessed by students. This is not simply a matter of a lack of words but rather the inability of students to find the right choice of words to convey important details in their stories. In the context of Webtoon, which relies on a combination of visuals and narratives, the ability to describe the setting, characters, and action in detail is very important. (Setyawan et al., 2020). When students struggle to find the right words to describe a lush forest, a character's intricate facial expressions, or dynamic movements in a fight scene, the result is a story that is less lively and less engaging. Strong descriptions not only enrich the visuals but also help readers feel and understand the world created by the author. This limited vocabulary

also affects students' ability to write authentic dialogue that reflects the character's personality. Bland and lifeless dialogue can make characters feel flat and less convincing. In addition to vocabulary, students also face challenges in understanding and implementing correct and effective sentence structure. Grammatical errors and messy sentence structures can make sentences ambiguous and difficult to understand and disrupt the overall flow of the story. In Webtoons, where every panel and word balloon plays a vital role in conveying information, clarity is key (Lasiyati, 2021). Convoluted or ungrammatical sentences can frustrate readers and make them lose interest in continuing to read. More than just a technical issue, these difficulties can also reduce students' confidence in their writing abilities. When students feel unsure about their ability to construct correct sentences, they may be reluctant to experiment with more creative writing styles or try to convey more complex ideas.

Psychological aspects also play a significant role in students' writing experiences. Researchers have found that many students experience a lack of self-confidence and fear of not producing satisfactory results. These concerns can trigger writer's block, inhibit creativity, and create a negative attitude toward writing. In a world where perfection is often glorified, students may feel afraid to take risks, experiment with new ideas, or show vulnerability through their writing (Arriyani, 2022). As a result, they may play it safe, avoid challenging topics, or even give up on the writing process altogether. It's important to remember that writing is a process that requires courage, persistence, and the ability to learn from mistakes. When students feel unsafe or unsupported, their creative potential may never be fully realized.

As a popular medium, Webtoon presents a variety of stories that are already very familiar to students. (S. Torres, 2022). However, researchers have found that excessive exposure to these stories can have the unintended side effect of being too influenced by existing stories. The tendency to imitate or adopt elements from other stories can hinder students' originality, innovation, and ability to develop unique characters and storylines. In a world filled with uniform content, students need to develop their voices and create works that reflect their unique perspectives, experiences, and imaginations. (Fauziah & Nasrullah, 2023) Encouraging students to explore different Webtoon genres, seek inspiration from other sources (such as books, films, art, and personal experiences), and develop a distinctive writing style is key to helping them break away from the influence of other stories and find their own creative identity.

Picture 2. Interview With Student

CONCLUSION

Webtoon apps can be a useful tool for teaching writing skills to students. However, many students face several barriers when using these apps. Problems that often arise include limitations in vocabulary, difficulty understanding good language structures, and lack of confidence, all of which can interfere with their writing process. In addition, technical constraints such as unstable internet connection also have a negative effect. To improve the use of Webtoon in writing learning, educators need to provide proper training on how to use the app. In addition, improving internet access in schools and implementing a more targeted approach to teaching are also indispensable. By addressing these challenges, students have a greater chance of turning their creative ideas inspired by Webtoon into interesting and quality writing.

The use of Webtoon apps in teaching writing shows great potential but is also faced with various challenges. The key findings of this study show that the app can increase students' motivation and creativity in writing. However, students experienced some difficulties, including limited vocabulary, difficulties in understanding good and correct language structures, and psychological problems such as a lack of self-confidence. The implication of these findings suggests that to maximize students' motivation and creativity in writing, the app should be used as a tool to improve students' motivation and creativity in writing.

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