CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Background of the Study**

The pandemic of COVID-19 had propound and multifaceted impact on the world, affecting nearly every aspect of human life, especially in the educational purposes. According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), the pandemic forced a worldwide shift to online operations, causing businesses, sports activities, and educational institutions to close their physical locations and transition to online platforms. In the education context, the teaching and learning process had been fully done with online or e-learning. This required the teachers to be able to utilize an online platform for the educational process so that the learning objectives will be achieved precisely. Currently, several platforms can be freely accessed to support the great learning process, such as Edmodo, Canvas, Google Classroom, etc. Meanwhile, several educators also utilize social media platforms to support the learning process. One of them is WhatsApp. According to Arumugam et al. (2019), the social media like WhatsApp allowed students and teachers to create online group. In addition, using WhatsApp for online learning can boost student collaboration, facilitate the sharing of valuable knowledge and information, and keep learning engaging and enjoyable (Hidayati et al., 2022). This platform can use to encourage students' interaction both with teacher and their friends.

Some studies had examined the utilization of WhatsApp as a medium of language learning at university students' level. Bensalem (2018) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of using WhatsApp for vocabulary learning among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The findings revealed that WhatsApp significantly enhanced vocabulary acquisition compared to traditional teaching methods. Another study by Ta'amneh (2017) found that students feel motivated, relaxed, and fun when they learn. English lessons can be learned more effectively through integrating technological applications such as WhatsApp rather than traditional methods. Since WhatsApp offers a very low cost with low internet

data consumption, some schools in Indonesia fully use it as a learning tool in every meeting of teaching-learning activities, especially in English Learning.

To find the issue of the study, the preliminary interview was conducted in 2021 with a student who is one of the participants involved in this study. The participant herself was a 12th-grade student who actively participated in English learning activities through WhatsApp group chat. The process of English learning activity was implemented by a teacher and students in the WhatsApp Group Chat. The activities began by checking class attendance, providing the material in multimedia terms such as video, pictures or documents, learning discussion and assignment was conducted in WhatsApp group chat.

Students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp in learning processes had been documented in some studies. For instance, Malecela (2016) examined students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool in a university in Malaysia. The results showed that WhatsApp as a valuable tool for communication with peers and instructors, collaborative learning, and accessing and sharing educational information. Gassaymeh (2017) aimed at investigating 154 university students' use of WhatsApp for personal and educational purposes in addition to examining their perceptions of WhatsApp in education. The results revealed that the participants perceived the integration of WhatsApp into education to be easy, fun, and useful and they had positive feelings and intentions about using WhatsApp in their formal learning. Another study by Wahyuningsih (2020) also highlighted the effectiveness of WhatsApp in supporting online courses through mobile devices. These studies consistently point to the potential of WhatsApp as a valuable tool for enhancing learning experiences.

Although many previous studies have examined the perception of the use of WhatsApp in an English learning context and most of them focused on university students, the study about students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp for English language learning in Indonesia is relatively low, especially at the Senior High School level. To fill this void, the present study focuses on students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp during English language learning in an Indonesian High School and using the qualitative research as the method of the research.

1.2 Formulation of the problems

A research question addressed in the present study is "What are the students' perceptions of the utilization of WhatsApp during English language learning in pandemic era?"

1.3 Operational definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this study, as follows:

1.3.1 Students' Perception :	The ability of students to respond or interpret the information they get and their experiences during learning activities
1.3.2 WhatsApp Application :	A social media platform to communicate each other which service message text or send multimedia such as pictures, voice notes, documents, etc.
1.3.3 English Language Learning :	A process of teaching and learning in English language.

1.4. Aim of the study

The study aims to investigate students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp during English Language Learning.

1.5. Significance of the study

1.5.1 Theoretical use

This study provides the development of theories in English language learning context related to the use of WhatsApp Application for learning English.

1.5.2 Empirical use

This study gives empirical insight in collecting and analyzing data regarding EFL Students' perceptions of their English language learning through WhatsApp that is being developed by qualitative case study so that they have better insight into their language learning context.

1.5.3 Practical Use

This research will help the teachers, students, and readers about the process of English language learning through WhatsApp so that they get a better understanding of the English teaching-learning process under certain kinds of circumstances.