Students' Perception of Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study on the English Students of STKIP Pamane Talino

Antonius Setyawan Sugeng Nur Agung[1✉], Monika Widyastuti Surtikanti[2], and Charito A. Quinones, OP[3]

[12]English Language Education Study Program, STKIP Pamane Talino
[3]Saint Paul University Manila, Pedro Gil St., Malate, Manila, Philippines
✉Jl. Afandirani, Ngabang, Landak, Kalimantan Barat-79357, Indonesia
✉a.agung@stkippamanetalino.ac.id

ABSTRACT

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The pandemic of COVID-19 has forced the Indonesian government through its Ministry of Education and Culture to implement policies moving conventional classroom to online classroom. The current study is a collective case study consisting of analysis of survey on students' perceptions of their online learning during the pandemic. Sixty-six students of English Language Education Study Program at Pamane Talino College of Education (STKIP Pamane Talino) were involved. Their perceptions of their online classroom that were recorded through a survey. The recorded perceptions are in terms of students' participation, accessibility, material and assignment delivery, and the use of e-learning platforms. The results were then summarized into tables and narrative descriptions. The study identified three major obstacles in conducting online learning in English Language Education Study Program at STKIP Pamane Talino: the first is availability and sustainability of internet connection, the second is accessibility of the teaching media, and the last is the compatibility of tools to access the media. The result of the current study suggests that accessibility is still the major factor influencing the success of online learning. Online learning for English Language Education Study Program at STKIP Pamane Talino, and potentially Indonesia in general, requires some more friendly platforms so that students' participation can be increased. This is especially for students who reside in rural areas with limited internet connections and other support systems.

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government took necessary actions to closely observe World Health Organization (WHO) situation report on the COVID-19 outbreak around the world since the dangerous virus was firstly identified in Wuhan, South China in November 2019. The virus then rapidly spread throughout the globe. Four days after WHO confirmed COVID-19 as the pandemic, on March 15, 2020, President Joko Widodo implement some policies to achieve social distancing in the society. He urged the public to work, study, and conduct religious practices from home.

Pandemic is a disease that is spreading in multiple countries around the world at the same time (Roxby, 2020). This situation has affected various sectors, including education. The Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, issued a Circular Note for schools and other educational institutions including higher education to temporarily stop the conventional teaching and learning activities in the schools and encourage lessons to be conducted from home through e-learning. He recommended teachers use various e-learning platforms such as Rumah Belajar, Quipper School, Ruang Guru, Google Classroom, Zoom, and so on. Nowadays, those e-learning platforms achieve popularity in Indonesia because they are widely used and installed. Online learning becomes one of the most current and potential issues.

Online learning has become a wide-spread practice over the years as an integrated technology in education. Previous studies represent its practice. Sharpe & Benfield (2005) investigated the students' experience of online learning at Oxford Brokes University. They highlighted some common themes in the student's online learning experience and recommends implications such as the emotionality of the student experience and concern about time and time management. Moreover, online learning developments based on changes to traditional pedagogy evoke the most inconsistencies in student perceptions and it is here that individual differences emerge as possible success factors. Smart and Cappel (2006) examine students' perceptions of integrating online components in two undergraduate business courses where students completed online learning modules before class discussion. The results reveal that participants in an elective course rated the online modules significantly better than those in a required course. Generally, participants in the elective course rated the online modules marginally positive while those in the required course rated them marginally negative. These outcomes suggest that instructors should be selective in the way they integrate online units into traditional, classroom-delivered courses. Fedynich, Bradley, and Bradley (2015) investigated graduate students' perceptions of online learning. The finding reveals that interaction, between students and the instructor, has a major impact on their satisfaction. Other challenges identified were sufficient learner support that linked to campus resources, and the need for varying instructional design and delivery to facilitate students' desire to learn. In contrast, students were highly satisfied with the clarity and organization of instruction using sufficient resources. The instructor's role was identified as being vitally important to students' satisfaction. In line with this, the conclusion of an Indonesian study on the students' perception of using e-learning shows positive responses to the assessment, learning outcomes, and evaluation (Mu'in & Amelia, 2018). Those studies somehow generate positive responses in a well-established condition and way up into advanced implementation of online learning.

Delivering the scope of online learning, Aparicio, Bacao, and Oliveira, T (2016), divides online learning into two main areas, learning, and technology where learning is the cognitive process for achieving knowledge, and technology is the tool to support the process of achieving it. Talking about the practice, the implementation of the use of technology according to Ryan in Smart and Cappel (2006) can be various, for example, the use of self-paced independent study units, asynchronous interactive sessions (where participants interact at different times), or synchronous interactive settings. The implementation of learning and technology is best viewed from the students' perception because they have direct experience of it. As an example, the conducted research by Armstrong (2011) on the students' perceptions of online learning and instructional tools shows that the students do not perceive the negative attributes of technology to be inherent. However, online learning implementation in rural areas may have more obstacles than it seems but few studies can be found. This research is going to fill the gap especially on the implementation of the use of technology.

The rapid growth in the online learning implementation may sound familiar for the educators but they have to understand how students perceive, access, and react to it. These factors may produce different implementation depends on where online learning takes place and who the students are. During the pandemic of COVID-19, the popularity of online learning in Indonesia spreads not only in the small cities but also in the villages even in rural areas. The ideal condition of its execution which has a very wide range implementation depends on the characteristics of each region. The Internet is the main requirement to conduct online learning. This obstacle appears enormously when Study from Home assigned by the Ministry of Education and Culture is being implemented in schools and higher education especially for those which are in rural areas. Responding to the government direction, the lecturers of Pamane Talino College of Education conducted online learning. This higher education is a college for teacher candidates located in Ngabang district, Landak Regency, West Borneo. Landak is considered to be the least-developed region. The college students are coming from various districts over the region. The main issue that the students have in conducting online learning is the internet connection. Some districts in Landak are still in remote areas with no internet. Moreover, the availability of public electricity is a secondary issue. Since the students' perception and attitude are critical toward the success of the learning program, thus the researchers would like to find out the perceptions of the students of the English Language Education Study Program on the online learning.

Perception is the experience of object, event, and relationship acquired by resuming information and interpreting message. It gives a meaning toward stimulus-response in resuming information and predicting message which involves attention, hope, motivation, and memory (Rakhmat, 2000). Following it, Michotte (2017) develops perception as a phase of the total process of action which allows us to adjust our activities to the world, we live in. Here, the students' perception can be described as the developed opinion after having a certain experience that needs adjustment. Therefore, in this research, the students' perception is focused on the student's participation, accessibility, materials, and assignment delivery, an online-learning platform suited to their needs and condition. Those factors are necessary to bring the students' perception of online learning to be more contextual with the needs of this research.

METHODS

This collective case study involves the analysis of the survey on the students' perceptions of online learning during the pandemic COVID-19. Those students' perceptions were described narratively. Sixty-six students of English Language Education Study Program at Pamane Talino College of Education participated in evaluating online learning conducted by lecturers.

The participants were from three different semesters. There were 38 (60.6%) freshmen students 20 (21.2%) sophomore students, and 8 (18.2%) junior students. The gender classification of the participants was 76% female and 24%, male. Their technology illiterate was classified into three groups namely poor, medium, and advanced. 9.1% of students are poor in mastering technology because this online learning was their first experience. 45.4% of students were in the medium group because they were already familiar with the application of the internet for basic use. 45.5% of students were familiar with mastering technology since they were accustomed to use or see it in higher education. Most of the students are having trouble with the poor internet connection when accessing online learning whether they are in Ngabang or not in Ngabang. This condition is worse for those who are in villages outside Ngabang because they have no signal at all there. It forces them to go miles outside their villages and go up to the hills to locate the signal. The brief description of the participants can be seen in the following Table 1.

Student Rank	Freshmen	60.6%
	Sophomore	21.2%
	Junior	18.2%
Gender	Female	76%
	Male	24%
Skill in Technology	Poor	9.1 %
	Medium	45.4%
	Advance	45.5%
Place during online learning	Ngabang	67.7%
	Outside Ngabang	33.3%

Table 1:   Description of Participants

Data of this study was collected through the analysis of students' perceptions, based on their personal experience during online learning. The questionnaire was designed based on the construct of perception theory. As stated before, this study focuses on 4 major topics namely student's participation, accessibility, materials and assignments delivery, and e-learning platform suited with their needs and condition. Thus, the questions were arranged based on those major topics. The questionnaire was distributed and collected in the form of Google Form with a combination of close and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions were used to obtain the percentage of the analyzed topics. Meanwhile, open-ended questions are used to gain the students' perception regarding the topics on the implementation of online learning. The received responses were calculated, analyzed, and described based on their topics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the Study from Home, it was reported that there were approximately ten from eleven subjects involved in online learning. There were 60.6% of the English lecturers conducting the course online. Meanwhile, 39.4% of the English lecturers merely sent the assignments through email and WhatsApp without any further guidance. From those who were giving online courses, it can be identified that most of them used asynchronous interactive session while the rest used synchronous interactive settings. The overall classification of the data collected from the participants would be presented under the following themes below:

Students' Participation

Among sixty-six students who participated in the survey, 93,9% of students were involved in online learning conducted by their lecturers while 6.1% of students were having problems joining the online session. During online learning, 87.9% of students were actively responding to the lesson while 12.1% were very passive. Most of the students who had a problem to join the class and who were very passive dealt with lack of data plan/ internet quota. Few of them had no proper gadgets such as android phones or laptops. The data of students' participation can be seen in the table below.

Students' involvement	Yes	93.9%
	No	6.1%
Interactive Response	Yes	87.9%
	No	12.1%

Table 2:   Students' Participation

Accessibility

Table 3 below shows the general condition of the students' accessibility to join online learning. There were 66.7% of students having an internet connection at their home but with an unstable signal while 33.3% did not have internet access. Such conditions were common in the least-developed region because of its limited infrastructures and public facilities (Agung, 2019). They had to go miles from their house or even village to locate the signal. Some of them went to their relatives to access the internet there while some of them had to go to the highest hill to find the availability of the internet signal. Good and stable signal strength during online learning was a lucky draw. There were only 24.3% of students had a good signal quality, 66.7% of students had unstable signals while 9.1% went with poor signal or no signal at all. Those having poor signal were in the middle of nowhere (very remote area). The availability of internet data/quota was their weaknesses because it was hard to provide it. According to open-ended questions regarding the use of internet data, the students answered that most of the lecturers gave assignments that made them browse, upload, edit, and send the files to various e-platform. As a consequence, they complained that they ran out of the internet data/quota.

The use of mobile phones was more common than laptops for students. There were 84.8% of students used android phone to join the online learning while 15.2% used laptop. Mobile phones are limited in terms of ram capacity, feature, and performance depends on the series of their mobile phones. Having a low-end mobile phone forced on them to have extra effort to install and re-install certain applications many times since the phone memory limits the number of

applications that can be installed at any given time. Thus, the students often struggle to join the online learning and do their assignments. There were 75.8% of the students' said that their gadgets were not compatible with online learning. The data of students' accessibility can be seen in Table 3.

Internet access at home	Available	66.7%
	Not available	33.3%
Signal strength during online learning	Stable	24.3%
	Unstable	66.7%
	Poor	9.1%
Sufficiency of Internet Data	Sufficient	33.3%
	Not sufficient	66.7%
Device used	Cellphone	84.8%
	Laptop	15.2%
Compatibility of the Device	Compatible	24.2%
	Not Compatible	75.8%

Table 3:   Accessibility

Material and Assignment Delivery

According to the survey, 54.5% of students said that the given materials were easy to comprehend. However, 45.5% of students said that it was difficult to comprehend them. Several students argued that offline class was more satisfying rather than online classes. Table 4 indicates that the delivered materials were relevant to the course. Most of the lecturers (81.8%) provided discussion, question, guidance, and explanation. They were also actively giving feedback to the students on the discussed topics. All the lecturers gave assignments to the students and they were relevant to the materials beforehand. The results of comprehensive direction indicated that some students understood the given direction easily while the others needed more explanation and guidance from the lecturers. The lecturers' response toward the students' submission of the assignment was good. Most lecturers (75.7%) gave their feedback. The data of material and assignment delivery is displayed in Table 4.

Comprehensive Material	Yes	54.5%
	No	45.5%
Material Relevancy	Yes	100%
	No	0%
Discussion and Question and Answer Session	Available	81.8%
	Not available	18.2%
Feedback	Available	100%
	Not available	0%
Assignment	Yes	100%
	No	0%
Assignment and material relevancy	Yes	93.9%
	No	6.1%
Comprehensive Direction	Yes	50%
	No	50%
Feedback	Yes	75.7%
	No	24.3%

Table 4:   Material and Assignments Delivery

The Use of E-Learning Platform

According to the students, the top four e-learning platforms for their Study From home were Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Zoom, and Edmodo. However, not all of them were suitable for the students' condition and needs. The students' recommendation on the use of e-learning platform was 75.8% on WhatsApp, 18.2% on Google Classroom, while 6.1% on Zoom. The data can be seen in the following Table 5.

E-Learning Platform Used by lecturers	Google Classroom	54.5%
	WhatsApp	27.3%
	Zoom	9.1%
	Edmodo	9.1%
E-Learning Platform based on students' recommendation	WhatsApp	75.8%
	Google Classroom	18.2%
	Zoom	6.1%
	Edmodo	0%

Table 5:   E-Learning Platform Used

According to the students, WhatsApp was the most compatible e-learning platform because they had it and did not need to install more applications which hard to do using low-end mobile phones. WhatsApp was considered as a friendly-internet data application for them. Moreover, it still worked on unstable signal. Referring to the students' responses, Edmodo and Zoom were considered as hard platforms to use because most of the students had no proper gadgets and extra internet data to access since they require more data to connect. They were not suitable for the students' budget. Meanwhile, Google Classroom was relatively simple because it gave several options on accessibility. If the students failed to install the application, it could be still be accessed through email and web browser. If they had no signal or electricity, all the given explanation, material, and quiz were on their reach when they had a chance to access it. Meanwhile, WhatsApp was their favorite because most of them had it installed on their mobile phone and they were familiar with how to use it. It also did not spend their internet data quickly. The best value of using WhatsApp was the fact that it worked enough well in a poor signal.

Students' Perception

Revealing the result of students' participation, the data shows most of the students were actively involved in online learning. However, it did not mean that they were enthusiastic. Most of them, 66.7% of students were not enthusiastic about having online learning while 33.3% were enthusiastic. The data of students' perception of the assignments revealed that 57.5% of the assignments weighed them down. Meanwhile, 42,5% thought that the meeting was fun, but they could not stand with the marathon assignments. Online learning was considered as fun teaching and learning compensation during this pandemic. However, the abundance tasks were killing them because all lecturers gave their assignments to them. Moreover, limited infrastructures in the villages such as the lack of internet connection and electricity forced students to travel and hike some hills out of their villages just to get hold of internet signal. Besides, most of them accessed the online learning through low-end mobile gadget. Their android mobile phones were not compatible because having small RAM, so they had no more space for a newly-installed program. The situation was rather frustrating for the students. Another obstacle is presented when the students have to spend extra money to afford the internet data which was considered

very expensive for them. Those obstacles made the students perceive online learning as challenging. The data of their perception can be seen in the following table 6.

Students' Enthusiasm	Yes	33.3%
	No	66.7%
Students' Perception of assignment	Fun but heavy	42.5%
	Heavy & stressful	57.5%

Table 6:   Students' Enthusiasm

In the open-ended questionnaire, some students express their perception of participating in online learning as seen in Table 7.

"This online learning is really enjoyable for me because I can use and learn more about technology. Through online learning, my technology and information skill are improved."
"Online learning is such a challenge for me because I have to study more by reading a lot of references to fulfil the tasks."
"It trains me to be more responsible and independence with my task."
"During this online learning, I have to go outside my village to get the internet signal. It is a bit tiring, but I have to fulfil the task anyway"
"The biggest problem I faced during online learning is the internet signal. Sometimes I have to be absent in online learning due to the poor internet signal. I can read the summary after all though."

Table 7:   Students' Perception of their Participation in Online Learning

Conducting online learning indeed comes with many consequences. Some students realized that their IT literacy made good progress during online learning. The e-learning platforms allowed users to access information on the personal computers while mobile e-learning (M-learning) allows users to access through mobile devices (Zamfiroiu & Sbora, 2014; Masa'deh et al., 2015; Almajali et al., 2016 as cited in Kattoa, Al-Lozi, & Alrowward, 2016). Thus, the students can interact with their online learning via such technological platforms. The Internet is considered the source of needed materials to achieve the goals of teaching and learning (Surtikanti, 2020). However, some regions with poor internet signal might face many problems in conducting online learning. The main issue of this condition was the internet connection. Network interaction can also present considerable challenges to both teachers and students (Peyton in Egbert & Smith, 1999). Referring to this theory, the absence of internet connection leads to bigger challenges because the presence of the interaction between lecturers and students failed to be accomplished.

The data of accessibility showed that the students were committed to joining the online course even though most of them had an unstable internet connection and enough internet data/ quota at their home. Moreover, they accessed the online classes through low-end mobile phones. However, the cost to earn online learning was the predominant factor of concern to 66.7% of students. Since the English lecturers conducted online learning form every Monday to Friday for about 3 weeks, the students did not have sufficient internet data/ quota for keeping them online. The students' concerns can be seen in table 8.

"Sometimes I couldn't join some online classes due to the limitation of my internet data. My parents didn't send me the money so I couldn't have a top-up internet data"
"The tasks sometimes have me to browse through the internet and upload some files. All the lecturers do the same so in a week I can spend more than Rp 300.000 which is relatively expensive for me"
"Besides the limitation of internet data, I have a problem with my cell phone. The memory space of my cell phone is limited while every lecturer has different e-learning applications that should be downloaded."
"My cell phone feature is not as advanced as some of my friends'. Sometimes it goes error and it is very annoying"

Table 8: Students' Perception of Accessibility in Online Learning

Referring to the previous finding on the challenges of network interaction, the researchers found that the sustainability of the signal strength and internet data leading to successful online learning.

Regarding the e-learning platform suitable for the students' needs and situation, WhatsApp was highly recommended since it was considered a friendly application for them and their gadgets. They were already familiar with it. Teaching materials (text, video, audio, learning link, file, and photo) could be transmitted easily within two-way interaction through the WhatsApp group. Moreover, the students claimed that WhatsApp relatively worked well under poor signal while the other applications cannot do as well as WhatsApp.

The material and assignments delivery in online learning was relatively good. The students thought that the delivered material and assignment were relevant to the course. The lecturers also provided discussion sessions to answer the students' questions. However, several students said that they could hardly understand the direction and materials provided in the assignments; conventional learning seemed more interesting for them. They argued that through the face-to-face meeting they could listen and watch the lecturer's explanation easily. In line with this, Rosenblit (2006) says that the need for humans to socialize is most essential. It explains why most students prefer to study in classrooms. It was indicated in table 9 as follows.

"I had difficulty in understanding both the material and assignments"
"I prefer having an offline class for an online class. It is because I can understand when the explanation is directly delivered. Moreover, I have interaction with the lecturer and my friends"

Table 9: Students' Perception of Material and Assignment Delivery

The students are not accustomed to online learning. Level of IT literacy, limited visualization, the absence of direct classroom communication, and poor internet connection lead to unsuccessful teaching and learning. Even though the topics & the materials were interesting for them, but they could not hear, receive a direct explanation, and convey their thought as well as the conventional classroom.

The students missed the conventional classroom because they could have a direct explanation and unlimited direct interaction during the class. Somehow, missed interpretation of the delivered materials and assignment occasionally happened because they had no direct guidance especially for those who had late access on the scheduled course.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic of COVID-19 has created a big tide of paradigm shift in Indonesia's education system: from physical to internet-based classrooms. Digital classroom appears to be the perfect answer for the sake of people's health. This condition forces teachers and students to work and study from home. In reality, the shift presents a significant challenge, especially for those who are in least-developed regions. The current study concludes that most English students are not ready for this rapid shift in terms of teaching and learning style. Various reasons were identified, and they can be categorized into three factors: the first is availability and sustainability of internet connection, the second is accessibility of teaching media, and the last is compatibility of tools to access the media. The good news is, the students also report that their IT literacy is improving when doing the stressful- marathon task, though they also report that they and their gadgets are not ready for this sudden hi-tech change.

Another issue that emerges in the current study, which may be relevant for further research on e-learning during pandemic COVID-19 in Indonesia, is that it is hard to find other resources and literature with comparable focus and situation, especially regarding online learning in rural areas. Furthermore, previous literature commonly deals with classroom practice on the internet, the students' understanding of authentic materials in a CALL environment, software practices, and aid in online assessment. However, here at STKIP Pamane Talino, we are still talking about the availability and sustainability of internet connection. On that note, WhatsApp is highly recommended media to use before Google Classroom because users (lecturers and students) are more familiar with WhatsApp and it is easier to be accessed. Moreover, this study highlights that online learning needs a friendly platform to gain the students' participation especially if it is held in rural areas. Accessibility is the major factor of successful online learning for STKIP Pamane Talino and potentially Indonesia in general. Grande materials which are displayed in a splendid platform will be useless if the students cannot access it.

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