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EFL Students' Preferences on Digital Platforms during Emergency Remote Teaching: Video Conference, LMS, or Messenger Application?

Fakhrurrazi M. Amin^{*1}
Hanna Sundari²

¹English Teaching Department, State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Langsa, Langsa 24411, INDONESIA

²English Education Department, Indraprasta PGRI University, Jakarta 12530, INDONESIA

Abstract

The use of technology in language learning has extensively expanded in line with the advancement of technology itself. However, the investigation into the implementation of video conferences, learning management systems, and mobile applications, particularly during the emergency remote teaching/the Covid-19 pandemic, is still lacking. This paper presents survey data from three groups of Indonesian EFL students using three different digital learning platforms: Cisco WebEx Meeting video conferencing, Google Classroom learning management system (LMS), and WhatsApp mobile messenger application. The purpose of the study was to determine the students' preferences including their perception and point of views on using the platforms and application during the remote teaching situation. There were 140 EFL students from two universities/institutes in Jakarta and Aceh to take part as the participants. The instrument was a questionnaire based on criteria of CALL evaluation, and descriptive analysis using percentages and thematic analysis was applied. The findings show that the Cisco WebEx Meeting, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp gained highly positive agreement on all criteria. Specifically, the Cisco WebEx meeting got the highest scores on authenticity and meaning focus. Meanwhile, for GC and WhatsApp, the criteria on language learning potential, meaning focus and authenticity achieved the highest scores. Moreover, WhatsApp is the most preferred among others in meaning focus, learner fit, positive impact, and practicality. However, the three digital platforms received the lowest score on a positive impact at each group-

* Corresponding author, email: fakhrurrazi.amin@iainlangsa.ac.id

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participant. It seemingly indicates that they thought the full online digital learning system they experienced during ERT is less preferable than face-to-face learning.

Keywords: Emergency remote teaching, EFL students, digital learning, language learning, and Covid-19 pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak had become a worldwide pandemic because the cases outside China rose 13 times and the number of countries with cases increased threefold over two weeks (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). Several days later, as reported by UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on March 18, 2020, approximately 107 countries had implemented national school closures concerning to this pandemic that has impacted 862 million children and young people around the world (Viner et al., 2020). The policy was to curb the widespread of the virus and to reduce the transmission and the number of cases.

In Indonesia, in the middle of March 2020, most schools and universities have been closed along with the presidential briefing and campaign to work, learn, and worship from home. Officially, as cited from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/> by Sutrisno (2020), the Indonesian government has issued two regulations, they are government regulation and Health Ministry regulation by early April to apply a large-scale social restriction (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar* or *PSBB*); it equals to partial lockdown. As a consequence, offices, schools, universities, and worship places have to close, and people move into online activities through *Work from Home* and *Learn from Home* agenda. In the educational sector, some schools and universities have applied the policy of remote teaching and online learning (Purwanto et al., 2020). It resulted in a situation where teachers and students are undesirably asked to change their teaching system from the offline face-to-face session in the classroom into a digital/virtual teaching system using various online platforms or applications. They must quickly learn and adapt their teaching and learning management to cope with this unprecedented situation. Likewise, an adjustment in teaching materials, media, and assessments is highly needed to be performed immediately. Teachers and students in the field of English as a foreign language have no differences in handling it.

The use of technology, such as gamification, application, and devices, in language classes, is not new. Digital tools, social media, and virtual environments have been extensively used in facilitating language teaching and learning. Indeed, Chun et al. (2016) have noted that teachers should pay more attention to technology for their classes since it affects language use. However, the present situation does not look like a well-planned daily teaching process with sophisticated technological devices in the classroom, nor does it seem to be as a usual online instruction. What teachers and students have these days is a critical situation in doing teaching with minimum sources in a hurry. Then, Hodges et al. (2020) called it Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to depict a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. Considering school and university closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, the quick-shifting from face-to-face to distance and online learning system can be considered as an ERT mode system.

Because of the unplanned teaching management, a lot of platforms and Learning Management System (LMS) are considerably and collaboratively used when implementing ERT. Mobile applications, such as WhatsApp, are handy and easy either synchronous or asynchronous. In the meantime, learning management systems, such as Canvas, Edmodo, Schoology, and Google Classroom, offer a virtual educational environment in preparing a lesson, distributing content materials, and designing an evaluation. Meanwhile, video conferencing provides face-to-face synchronous communication between teachers and students in real-time interaction. Each platform gives advantages as well as has some drawbacks to fulfill the teaching needs. Consequently, some teachers prefer to use more than one platform collaboratively to satisfy the students' needs on learning. For example, EFL teachers from 11 different cities in Indonesia applied several platforms and applications for teaching English in secondary schools during the ERT situation though, in fact, they faced some challenges in implementing them (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020).

Those platforms have been widely applied for teaching language in online classrooms. However, students' preferences during this crisis are still unknown and need to be explored. The shifting mode of teaching from face-to-face classes to virtual remote teaching can assumingly influence the overall teaching system. The adjustment from both students and teachers are highly required to maintain the teaching session professionally. Meanwhile, a study to explore how students perceive the selected digital platforms is profoundly limited; therefore, this investigation became necessary and essential. As mentioned by Hodges et al (2020), students' attitudes towards online instruction can affect the perception of the success of teaching and learning. As a result, this present study aims at investigating the EFL students' preferences on video conference, learning management system, and mobile messenger application in facilitating language learning during ERT. The study was addressed to answer the following question: what do EFL students perceive and prefer on the use of Cisco WebEx Meeting video conferencing Google Classroom LMS, and WhatsApp mobile messenger application during ERT?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Technology in Teaching English as Second/Foreign Language Learning

Just what technological education has in general, at first language classrooms equipped themselves with chalk, pen, and chalkboard moving into whiteboards and markers. Nowadays, due to the advancement of information and technology, it has become an interactive online whiteboard with a smart pen. It is not a board in the literal meaning, but a kind of virtual learning space that put students and teacher together in a real-time meeting via the internet. Back to the 1950s and 1960s, language laboratory was one of the types of technology widely used to support language classes (Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012). Computer software packages or programs applied for language teaching and learning created a study of Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) and a set of criteria to evaluate their effectiveness (Jamieson et al., 2013). In the present day, it is not uncommon when language teachers also bring online tools, applications, or digital devices into the classroom to facilitate their teaching as well as to create more attractive and engaging learning sessions. The virtual environment such

as MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) allows people around the world to design their own rooms through verbal descriptions and to develop linguistic cues (Chun et al., 2016). Moreover, e-learning, including mobile device media, gives flexibility in space and time for learners (Warni et al., 2018). Consequently, the terms, such as technology-based learning (Wichadee, 2013), technology-enhanced instruction (Stepp-Greany, 2002) and blended/hybrid learning have gained huge popularity among teachers and language educators; as well as technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) (Alberth, 2013; Yang & Chen, 2007), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) (Eaton, 2010), and the similar terms have been loudly echoed in the line with the expansion of technology and new emerging technological platforms into language classrooms.

Technology has been extensively adopted in the field of second/foreign language teaching in the term of lesson preparation, content/material development, and language testing. The discussion and study of technology are not new for language course designer or tester (Chalhoub-Deville, 2001). Chen (2012) concluded that it has proven to give positive effects in widening the horizons of L2 learning and influencing the nature of acquisition process and the object of study in two ways: increasing the amount of L2 exposure and expanding scopes of L2 input. In an almost similar viewpoint, Sekhan (2003) simplified it by saying that technology is a potential source of language learning material and input. The good main point of technology is that it can be a tool to connect EFL learners to the native speakers of the target language, both through synchronous and asynchronous modes in authentic communication (Alberth, 2013). Through the use of technology, EFL learners get more opportunities to search authentic materials from real language use. Moreover, a study by Yulia et al. (2019) found that online assessment increases students' mastery of listening skills and reading skills.

The empirical evidence from tremendous previous research has proven that technology-enhanced language learning has presented plentiful authentic material as well as an opportunity to practice language skills and be more participative on the course (Alberth, 2013). Yang and Chen (2007) have yielded that the use of multimedia technology, in this case, Computer-Mediated Language Learning, brought positive effects to language teaching in several aspects: facilitating communication, reducing anxiety, encouraging oral discussion, increasing students' motivation, and developing writing skill and thinking connection. In an almost similar fashion, Chen (2012) reported that research has indicated that the use of technology may stimulate positive attitudes, for example, an increased level of interest, motivation, interaction, and language production. To be more specific, research by Setiawan and Wiedarti (2020) revealed that Quizlet application is effective in increasing students' motivation; moreover, Krishnapatria et al. (2019) concluded that English language teaching using online Google Maps application can promote students' engagement and enhance their writing skill. Additionally, Stepp-Greany (2002) has discussed the advantages of technology for language learning and divided it into two sections, affective issues, and linguistics skills, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Advantages of TELL (Stepp-Greany, 2002).

Affective Benefits	Linguistics skills
The development of independent learning characteristics (Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992)	Improvement in students writing skill (Beauvois, 1998)

Table 1 continued...

Low-anxiety situation and motivating force (Beauvois, 1998)	Improvement in reading comprehension (Lunde, 1990)
Communication, empowerment, and learning (Waschauer, 1996)	Increased confidence in speaking (Beauvois, 1994)
Teacher and classmates' attention and participation (Hartman et al., 1995)	

2.2 Video Conference, Learning Management System, and Applications in Teaching and Learning

The technology used in facilitating either education or language learning can be in the form of various digital devices, computer software programs, websites, a mobile application on a laptop or mobile phone, and any other technological products. This research focused on the use of video conferencing, learning management systems (LMS), and mobile messenger application. Those digital platforms have been extensively applied for language learning. Still, none of them is to facilitate remote teaching on the unprecedented situation, such as the Covid-19 pandemic where teachers and students are forced to move from face-to-face mode to full virtual remote teaching system unplanned.

A virtual real-time video presentation is one synchronous delivered live from a desktop or laptop computer to an audience anywhere in the world with an internet connection (Flatley, 2007). Also, a similar name is a web conference that refers to a contemporary Internet-Based Approach including video and audio components and a variety of features to enable more enhanced interaction through the desktop (Mujačić et al., 2014). Tools of web video conference are tremendous, such as Team Viewer GmbH, Cisco WebEx, Adobe Connect 9.2, IBM SmartCloud Meetings, Microsoft NetMeeting (Mujačić et al., 2014) and Cisco TelePresence/WebEx, Google Meet/Hangouts (Janitor et al., 2012). In Indonesia, Skype has been famous as a virtual meeting and presentation, and some video conference services become extensively well-known among the teachers during the pandemic, for example, Zoom, Cisco WebEx Meeting, Google Meet/Hangout, and Microsoft Teams.

Though some video conference tools were firstly manufactured to enhance productivity and maximize efficiency in doing business; its usage for educational purposes has been greatly common. Mujačić et al. (2014) reported that the use of web conferences significantly influences the increase of satisfaction and interest with the blended learning students for a more active way of learning. Using Microsoft Live Meeting, Flatley (2007) utilized it for a business communication course and found its excellence in incorporating virtual oral presentation. Cisco WebEx Meeting, compared to other video conference tools, offers a wide spectrum of features with the best service quality, though the highest final grade went to Team Viewer; see the comparison of web conferencing tools (scale 1-5, the lowest to the highest) in Table 2. From other empirical evidence, Phongsatha and Cleesuntorn (2017) implemented WebEx as a part of teaching and learning and reported that the video-conference service has supported it and provided students with an effective teaching method. They concluded that the usages of the WebEx benefit on both sides. For faculty members, it was helpful for advising, tutorial, discussion, and work presentation; meanwhile, for students, the usage of the WebEx was convenient and effective for the discussion and presentation.

Then, Goreva (2007) integrated WebEx into programming course instruction and found that the average scores were higher than the scores on course without it.

Table 2. Comparison of web conferencing tools (Mujačić et al., 2017).

Criteria	Web Conferencing Tools				
	Team Viewer 9	Cisco WebEx Meeting	Adobe Connect 9.2	IBM SmartCloud Meeting	Microsoft NetMeeting
Functionality	2	4	4	3	1
Usability	5	3	3	3	5
Meeting Setup	5	5	5	5	1
Software	5	5	1	3	3
Installation					
Security	4	5	4	4	1

Besides video conferencing tools, learning management systems (LMS) have become one of the integral systems of teaching and learning. LMSs such as Blackboard, MOODLE, Canvas, have had a greater market among the educational institutions especially in higher education (Dahlstrom et al., 2014). Google Classroom (GC), as one of LMSs, was developed by several members of Google's G Suite for Education Program and launched in 2014 to help the educational institution to go paperless system. In line with its purposes to serve the school system, Heggart and Yoo (2018) evaluated its effectiveness among primary teachers and concluded that GC increased student participation and learning and improved classroom dynamics. It also revealed concerns around pace and user experience. Moreover, almost a similar finding came from Azhar and Nayab (2018). They wrote that though it did not significantly impact the overall teaching, GC was effective for uploading assignments, classroom management, and student-teacher communication. In 2018, Al-Marroof and Al-Emran (2018) adopting Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), reported that the two features (usefulness and ease) affect significantly the chosen sample of undergraduates' intention as GC works as a facilitator to develop their learning activities. As a result, GC can be a potential tool for teaching and learning (Iftakhar, 2016) and receives positive satisfaction in the area of access, communication and interaction (Shaharane et al., 2016) providing that both teachers and students understand how to use it (Megawati & Astutik, 2018).

Another digital tool that gets more accustomed to using is a mobile messenger application. WhatsApp Messenger application is the most popular messaging application with 1.5 billion users in 180 countries (Iqbal, 2020). In Indonesia alone, there were more than 170 million internet users in January 2020, and WhatsApp reached the top rank as the first mobile application throughout 2019 (Kemp, 2020). WhatsApp, as the name suggested, was firstly founded by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 to allow the users to send messages both text and voice, and share documents and pictures. There are also some collaborative features, such as multimedia, group chat, and cross-platform engagement (Elas et al., 2019). Despite the wider use of WhatsApp, the expansion of its use as a learning tool has commonly known and the evidence shows its effectiveness. WhatsApp for teaching has helped to mediate teacher reflection in classroom practice (Prayogo & Widyaningrum, 2019), improving the critique writing skill (Awada, 2016) and writing skill in general (Fattah, 2015), pursuing learning activity in a blended learning integration (Barhoumi, 2020), and supporting learning outside in language classrooms (Rahman et al., 2018).

Additionally, this mobile messenger application has served in supporting teacher-candidates in higher education to achieve the course goals (Sayan, 2016), increasing motivation to write (Allagui, 2014), improving vocabulary (Bensalem, 2018) and English communication skills (Hamad, 2017; Manan, 2017).

3. METHODS

The purpose of this current research was to explore EFL students' preferences towards the use of digital platforms during ERT/the Covid-19 pandemic. To achieve the research purpose and provide the answer to the question, a descriptive research framework was selected using a survey method. As mentioned by Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), the main purpose of surveys is to describe the characteristics of a population and to figure out how the members distribute on one or more variables. In this case, the preferences including perception and opinion on the use of the digital platform during ERT became the attribute to explore. Conducting Purposive Technique Sampling, the participants of the research were 140 university students, comprising 113 females and 27 males, with ages ranged between 18-25 years old and only three participants above 25 years old. All the participants underwent a remote teaching system through Cisco WebEx Meeting, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp from two universities in Jakarta dan Aceh. To be more specific, 42 participants used GC for seven meetings and 45 participants were facilitated by WhatsApp during eight meetings of the course. Both courses were taken from one private university in Jakarta. Meanwhile, Cisco WebEx Meeting has helped ten meetings of English courses with 53 participants in one state Islamic institute in Aceh. All in all, there were three groups of participants using three different digital platforms.

For collecting the data, a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to each group-participants to capture their preferences, including perception and experiences in using the digital platforms. The questionnaire was developed based on the criteria of CALL evaluation initiated by Jamieson et al. (2013), as seen in Table 3. A 3-choice questionnaire using a Likert scale with three responses ('yes very much', 'somewhat', and 'not at all') covers two criteria: language learning potential and meaning focus. On the other hand, a 4-choice closed-questionnaire using a Likert scale was administered with responses from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' for statements related to criteria: learner fit, positive impact, and practicality. In addition to that, two items of questions on an opened-ended questionnaire were also delivered to gain the students' perception about experiencing remote learning using digital platforms that may not be covered on closed-questionnaire. It is because open-ended questions allow for more individualized responses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The questions on the survey were also included some basic demographic items.

Table 3. Criteria of CALL evaluation (Jamieson et al., 2013).

No.	Criteria	Descriptor	Items
1	Language Learning Potential	The degree of opportunity present for beneficial focus on form	3 items
2	Meaning Focus	The extent to which learner's attention is directed toward the meaning of the language	3 items

Table 3 continued...

3	Learner Fit	The amount of opportunity for engagement with language under appropriate condition, given learner characteristic	4 items
4	Authenticity	the degree of correspondence between the learner activity and the target learner activity of interest of the learners outside the class	2 items
5	Positive Impact	The positive effects of the CALL activity on those who participate in it	4 items
6	Practicality	The adequacy of resources to support the use of the CALL activity	2 items

After the answers to the survey have been recorded, the final task was data analysis. Descriptive data analysis using percentage was carried out as well as a thematic analysis for open-ended questions. To ensure the validity or truthfulness of the instrument, data, and the overall research process, the second researcher formulated and designed the instrument and conducted initial data analysis; after that, the first researcher then checked and evaluated the instrument and data. The research took content-related evidence of validity which concerns having someone to look at the content and format of the instrument and judge whether or not it is appropriate (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). For any disagreement between researchers, rechecking and discussion were applied to achieve sufficient agreement. The summary of the responses was then reported, presented, and concluded to serve the research question.

4. RESULTS

This current paper was addressed to describe the students' preferences on the use of the Cisco WebEx Meeting (CWE), Google Classroom (GC), and WhatsApp (WA) among three different groups of student-participants during ERT/the Covid-19 pandemic. The results were presented based on six criteria of CALL evaluation and responses upon opened questions among the three platforms and applications.

The first criterion was the language learning potential. It explores the learning opportunity focusing on material delivery and language exercise that allows students to learn a language. Based on the result in Table 4, WhatsApp got the highest percentage on material delivery, but GC gained on top of presenting language exercise. Not only that, almost half of participants on each group-participant, 44%-61% of them, perceived that the digital platforms they used during ERT were as beneficial and potential in language learning.

Furthermore, on the criterion of meaning focus, directions, and instruction on GC considered to be easier to follow, with 57% of responses. On the other hand, WA ranked the first position on content material learnability, followed by GC and CEM respectively, see Table 5.

Table 4. Results on language learning potential.

Statements	Cisco WebEx		Google Classroom		WhatsApp	
	Yes, very much	Somewhat	Yes, very much	Somewhat	Yes, very much	Somewhat
I can learn the materials through this tool.	32%	45%	47%	52%	51%	46%

Table 4 continued...

I can understand the materials through this tool.	26%	45%	33%	61%	48%	44%
I can do the exercises through this tool.	26%	54%	47%	45%	44%	44%

Table 5. Results on meaning focus.

Statements	Cisco WebEx		Google Classroom		WhatsApp	
	Yes, very much	Some-what	Yes, very much	Some-what	Yes, very much	Some-what
I can follow the directions and instructions given on this tool.	52%	33%	57%	38%	53%	44%
I can understand the materials through this tool.	28%	47%	38%	52%	48%	46%
I tend to learn more about the content materials using this tool.	22%	58%	38%	50%	48%	46%

On the criterion of learner fit, the majority of participants from each group-participant chose ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ towards the given statements. The responses on disagree and strongly disagree gained a small number of percentages; therefore, they were not displayed in the table. Achieving high percentages indicates that the student-participants thought that those three digital platforms were suitable to EFL learners. However, among the three, WA posited the highest percentage on learning style and learning preferences. On the contrary, related to the students’ age, both WA and CEM reached the same agreement. Moreover, the students perceived that course goals can be achieved using GC, WA, and CEM, equals 85%, 85%, and 67%, respectively. On authenticity, the three digital platforms received a great number of agreements, above 73% agreement on all statement items. It shows that the students felt the content and medium language used were authentic as used in the real world. Additionally, GC gained the highest percentage to provide contents materials needed for real learning, as seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Results on learner fit and authenticity.

Statements	Cisco WebEx		Google Classroom		WhatsApp	
	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
Learner Fit						
This tool fits my learning style.	9%	58%	16%	66%	24%	64%
This tool suits my age.	15%	77%	26%	64%	31%	60%
This tool fits my learning preferences.	9%	64%	12%	73%	31%	57%
This tool suits to the course goals.	5%	62%	16%	69%	28%	57%
Authenticity						
The content of this tool is what I need for learning.	7%	66%	23%	66%	28%	57%
The language is used in real communication.	11%	83%	26%	66%	31%	66%

Furthermore, the results on the criteria of positive impact and practicality were displayed in Table 7. In general, the student-participants at each group expressed positive agreement towards the impact and practicality of using the digital platforms. As of more than 60% on the percentage, the students-participants found that CEM, GC, and WA are enjoyable and recommended for a future course. Among the three, WA got the most positive preference on impact. In the term of practicality, the all-digital platform received a relatively high number on percentage; WA (97%), GC (90%), and CEM (84%) successively. The comparison of the mean score on the three digital platforms and applications used in the research is displayed in Table 8.

Table 7. Results on positive impact and practicality.

Statements	Cisco WebEx		Google Classroom		WhatsApp	
	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
Positive Impact						
I enjoy learning using this tool.	16%	58%	16%	64%	35%	55%
I prefer this tool to a face-to-face class.	9%	62%	19%	42%	33%	37%
I would like to recommend my colleagues to use this tool.	9%	64%	12%	69%	22%	60%
I would like to use this tool for future class/course.	11%	62%	12%	61%	24%	51%
Practicality						
The features of this tool are relatively easy to operate.	5%	79%	21%	69%	40%	57%
I do not need help to operate this tool.	5%	56%	21%	61%	33%	55%

In a summary of overall scores, the three digital learning platforms used on this research received a great number of preferences, with scores ranging between 73-95 on six criteria. CEM achieved the highest scores on authenticity and meaning focus respectively. Meanwhile, group-participants of GC thought that this LMS provides authenticity, meaning focus, and language learning potential. Similar to WA, students felt that it benefits them on these three criteria. Even though those three digital learning platforms bring their high preferences among their users, the lowest score at each platform was gained on the criteria of positive impact: 73 on CEM, 74 on GC, and 79 on WA. It indicates that, though the participants enjoyed learning using the digital platforms, they felt doubt to use it for future courses and face-to-face teaching systems may be more preferable because it was their first-time digital learning experiences in an unexpected learning situation.

Table 8. Summary of scores from the digital learning platforms.

Criteria	Digital Learning Platforms and Application		
	Cisco WebEx	Google	Mobile Messenger
	Meeting	Classroom LMS	WhatsApp
Language Learning Potential	76	95	92
Meaning Focus	80	91	95
Learner Fit	75	86	88
Authenticity	84	91	91
Positive Impact	73	74	79
Practicality	74	86	93

For open-ended questions, student-participants at each group were asked to respond to the same question related to what aspect is the most useful and valuable on the course through digital platforms. Group-participants whom they were utilized by CEM declared that it was able to (R refers to Response, and 1 refers to the number of data display in this section):

R1 'facilitate the distance learning process and this tool is clearly for use as a learning media' (CW-4).

Some also expressed the benefits of using this tool, as on the excerpts below:

R2 'This is easy to operate and suitable for students'. (CW-7)

R3 'Can learn in difficult circumstances'. (CW-9)

R4 'Easy to operate and don't need much internet credit'. (CW-11)

R5 'Students and lecturers can still meet face to face even from different places and still be able to discuss'. (CW-18)

R6 'Can still communicate remotely'. (CW-20)

R7 'Chat rooms are available. This makes it easier for lecturers to explain misunderstandings in the explanation'. (CW-26)

R8 'Easier for users to collaborate with each other through images, video, and sound from anywhere'. (CW-27)

A student-group of GCs revealed that the main functions were the feature for submission of assignment and material distribution. It allows the students to submit the assignment and check the old content/materials on the storage without feeling chaotic. Two students mentioned the advantages of GC as:

R9 'Submit assignment feature, so I can make sure that no one will copy my work'. (GC-20)

R10 'learning becomes easy to remember because there are notes that are easy to keep, and don't need to write on paper'. (GC-32)

The last was the application. And the group-participants mostly agreed that it provides ease and practicality for them due to its mobility. Each student had already installed it on a cell phone and used it daily, as mentioned by WA-7 and WA-40. Another advantage was a voice feature that allows teachers to provide audio material, as written by WA-18:

R11 'the application provides an audio recorder feature so the lecturer can explain material well'. (WA-18)

All in all, language learning through digital platforms during ERT is undeniable and, in fact, still beneficial on learners' points of view, though it requires adjustment and negotiation from both teachers and students. Immediate shifting to digital learning surely brings a few complaints such as:

R12 'I'm more interested in learning face to face than like this'. (WA-11)

One student further expressed that:

- R13 '...for me studying like this is still rather confusing, but I will try to be more accustomed'. (GC-10)

At the end of the day, CW 10 wrapped up the teaching-learning situation on the sound statement:

- R14 'it cannot be face to face, learning continues as usual and runs smoothly even though it is undeniable that there are few signal constraints when using online learning like this'. (CW-10).

5. DISCUSSION

The advancement of technology brought significant changes in education and, in particular language learning and teaching. The expansion of technological devices, such as language lab, videos, blogs, podcasts, websites, and other virtual live environment has dramatically shifted the way teachers teach, the content materials presented, and the language examination is given. [Eaton \(2010\)](#) stated that today's language classroom is vastly different from in the mid-to-late twentieth century, and technology has brought the world into the students' fingertips.

At first, the current results of the research generally revealed that each group-participant perceived favorable agreement among the three digital platforms despite the unexpected shifting on teaching mode and the limitations. The sudden change from face-to-face to a remote system causes an unplanned teaching system; at the same time, technology needs readiness on the part of teachers ([Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012](#)) and the students as well.

Furthermore, the current findings on the survey show that Cisco WebEx and Google Classroom received a positive agreement. A similar result came from the study by [Wichadee \(2013\)](#). It found that the use of technology concerning video conference and learning management system was a new learning experience and motivated them to be more responsible and more encouraged because of receiving fast feedback online. Similarly, the research by [Warni et al. \(2018\)](#) concluded that technology used outside the classroom such as television, laptop, and mobile phone is beneficial in helping to learn English and support to support students' autonomy.

Concerning the use of the Cisco WebEx Meeting, it received positive agreement on all criteria from the student-participants surveyed on the course. They expressed that, though in crisis circumstances such as a Covid-19 pandemic we had these days, learning keeps continuing using face-to-face video conferences. This view is consistent with that of [Phongsatha and Cleesuntorn \(2017\)](#) who stated that utilizing WebEx as part of teaching/learning is a convenient and effective method for the discussion and presentation. As well, the current finding is also supported by [Mujčić et al. \(2014\)](#). They summed up that web conference tool significantly influences the increase of satisfaction and interest with the blended learning students for a more effective way of learning.

Among the platforms surveyed, only Google Classroom was developed for educational purposes at first. Unsurprisingly, it received the highest score on language learning potential and has successfully served in distributing learning materials, task submission, and grading. This is consistent with the previous studies that revealed Google Classroom is effective in classroom management ([Azhar & Nayab, 2018](#)) with

its ease and usefulness (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018). This LMS also becomes a potential teaching-learning tool (Iftakhar, 2016).

The students on the present survey perceived that the three digital platforms and applications they used on remote teaching periods meet the positive agreement of the criteria on technology for language learning, namely: language learning potential, meaning focus, learner fit, authenticity as well as practicality and positive impact. Among the three, WhatsApp received the most preferred with the highest percentage on most of the statements. For students, WhatsApp is not new; it is already installed on their mobile phones for instant messaging services for every-day communication. This year, WhatsApp hits the rank one at top mobile application among Indonesian users, followed by Facebook and Instagram respectively (Kemp, 2020). Compared to video conference and LMS, WhatsApp is more popular and familiar among the participants on the survey. It possessed the highest score on meaning focus, learner fit, positive impact, and practicality. This result supports the previous studies concerning the positive effects of WhatsApp as a learning tool, such as pursuing learning activity (Barhoumi, 2020), supporting learning outside the classroom (Rahman et al., 2018), and improving English communication skill (Hamad, 2017; Manan, 2017) and motivation to write (Allagui, 2014).

All in all, however, the student-participants at each group generally found those three platforms easy, practical, and helpful to facilitate learning during ERT. The positive attitude among the students seemingly results from the fact that their age mostly ranges between 18-25, named as generation Z (Poláková & Klímová, 2019). Young people are digital natives; they never experience life before the internet so that they become accustomed to technological advances in multimedia, such as tablets, smartphones, and social media (Turner, 2015). Of course, in general, students perceive a positive attitude toward using technology platforms and applications for they are relying on technological devices in their daily lives (Alberth, 2013). However, the group-participants at each digital platform thought that the experience of digital virtual teaching they had during ERT was less preferable provided that the criteria of positive impact were the lowest of all. This learning system seems the only alternative option to maintain the learning process and process amid the pandemic. As what the teachers had in managing the fully online learning in ERT situation, they found many problems related to technology, learning activity, the students and the students' parents (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020), but they do not have other choices; except planning and preparing for the future lesson. It seems that the student-participants are seemingly good digital consumers, but they are still in the first step to be advanced digital learners.

6. CONCLUSION

This current study was to explore the students' preferences on digital learning platforms during the emergency remote teaching. The major finding shows that the student-participants at each group of three digital platforms on the survey, Cisco WebEx Meeting video conferencing, Google Classroom learning management system, and WhatsApp mobile messenger application perceives positive agreement and feel much learning and improvement though it was in an unprecedented situation. Approximately 44%-61% of the student-participant at each group agreed that the platform they used was beneficial and potential for language learning.

For Cisco WebEx video conferencing, it scored within 73 to 84 for all six criteria. Authenticity received the highest score. It indicates that the student-participants felt Cisco WebEx help them learn using the real language for communication. Meanwhile, Google Classroom LMS achieved 74 to 95 in six criteria; the lowest score on positive impact and the highest score on language learning potential. This shows that the student-participant who used Google Classroom found that it brings good potential as a language learning tool, but they may feel doubt to use it for the next course. The use of Google Classroom might need to be accompanied by other platforms or applications to create a more communicative and interactive session. On the other hand, the WhatsApp mobile messenger application receives more positive agreement and preferences in four out of six criteria: meaning focus (95), learner fit (88), positive impact (79), and practicality (93). The student-participants facilitated by WhatsApp perceived that this application is practical and suitable for them in the term of age, preferences, and style.

The findings of this research can be a consideration dealing with the policy of ERT or online virtual learning of English classes in the future at the higher education level. However, it needs to be carefully generalized since the context is very specific. The single instrument used on the research, a questionnaire, may not reflect other important sides of the teaching-learning process using these digital platforms during ERT.

Considering the facts above, a further investigation on figuring out teachers' perceptions and preferences toward the use of digital learning platform is highly advised. Moreover, multiple instruments for data collection will depict a more comprehensive understanding of this issue. Additionally, having known that the policy of remote teaching system will be continued for the university level of education in Indonesia, future research can advisedly be about the effectiveness of each digital platform upon specific learning skill, such as speaking skill and writing skill, conducted in an either qualitative or quantitative framework.

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