

Students' Perception of English Online Learning During Covid-19 in North Sumatera

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ABSTRACT

With the impact of Covid-19, everything has been changing especially in the education field. The learning-teaching process transforms into an online platform. This is one of the alternative solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic era, But the transition from the offline class to the online class has proved challenging for some students and teachers. The purpose of this study was to analyze why students do not perceive online classrooms as providing the same learning experience as the traditional classroom. The Research questions are about the perceptions and experiences of the Senior High School students in North Sumatera in the online classroom as opposed to the traditional classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Qualitative descriptive approach was used in this research. There were 24 students of senior High School from different schools taken as participants. The Data were collected through questionnaires which were distributed to the students and interviewed. The research findings showed that students prefer classroom learning (offline meetings) to online learning for some reasons. The results of the study will help school administrators focus on making the online class more engaging for students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 outbreak necessitated the shift from in-person training to remote internet teaching. In higher education contexts, the closure of institutions and the implementation of online learning platforms have resulted in a transition from supervised paper-and-pencil exams to online take-home exams (Gamage, de Silva, and Gunawardhana 2020; Jacobs 2021). The growing pace of online education has been remarkable. Allen and Seaman (2008) reported that the number of students enrolled in online courses in the US increased from 1.6 million in autumn 2002 to over 3.9 million in autumn 2007. A significant number of persons who choose to continue higher education at the graduate level prefer to register in online programmes. In autumn 2007, a total of 14% of students who were registered for online courses were actively engaged in pursuing graduate degrees. At

present, there exist about 1600 online graduate degree programmes offered by 110 approved higher education institutions (eLearners.com, 1999–2010). Given the growing enrollment in these programmes, there is a need for new approaches to retain and assess both students and programmes.

The availability of higher education through online platforms has surged, leading to a growing number of students opting for enrollment in online colleges to acquire knowledge and skills. Online learning is available to students in colleges and secondary schools in the United States (Fredericksen, 2017). Online learning is an attractive educational alternative due to its provision of flexibility and convenience to students. Nevertheless, similar to traditional classrooms, a primary issue remains regarding the maintenance of student motivation and engagement in the online environment. Engagement is a crucial element in online learning, since dropout rates are higher compared to the traditional in-person setting (Angelino, Williams, & Natvig, 2007). According to Meyer (2014), there is a direct correlation between student engagement and beneficial outcomes such as student satisfaction, persistence, and academic performance.

In addition, Cakrawati conducted a study in Bandung, West Java, where she examined 40 participants from junior and senior high schools. According to Cakrawati and Laxmi Mustika (2017), the use of online learning platforms, such as Twitter for sharing ideas and Edmodo or Quipper for discussions, has been found to be both effective and efficient in the language learning process. This approach saves time and allows students to practise their language skills and acquire new vocabulary. Additionally, students demonstrate a good understanding of the teaching materials provided for language learning. An intriguing subject to explore is the potential distinctions in students' views between North Sumatera and West Java.

The use of WhatsApp for distance education has been the subject of additional research in addition to Twitter and Edmodo. Despite its benefits and drawbacks, WhatsApp was demonstrated to considerably increase primary school children' learning results (Sari & Sari, 2021). Students' interest, engagement, and performance improved in a blended online course that incorporated WhatsApp mobile learning activities compared to a traditional in-class setting (Rambe & Bere, 2013). Also, research on WhatsApp's efficacy as a learning platform was conducted at a medical school in South Africa, and the results showed that the app helped students stay in touch with one another and offer constructive criticism and encouragement to one another (Maske, Dreyer, & Hausafus, 2020). The results of this research suggest that WhatsApp is an app that can be used to boost students' motivation, engagement, and academic success by easing the flow of information between them and their teachers.

Erliana's study found that most students in Aceh's vocational higher education institutions believe online learning to be ineffective because they focus more on hands-on experience than on theoretical concepts, because most students cannot afford sufficient internet packages, and because it is difficult to gain access to the internet in rural areas. Simpson (2012) and Travers (2016), however, found that online students had lower completion rates than those attending traditional classes. Even though online education can be as effective as in-person instruction (Genc et al., 2016), few students report feeling either motivated or satisfied with their online courses. Researchers in North Sumatera-Indonesia are motivated to learn more about the topic at hand by the wide range of perspectives being expressed on it.

This condition of COVID-19 drives universities to make changes in the process of teaching by applying various teaching methods, which will help students who have less motivation in online classes compared to the traditional class to achieve success (Garaus et al., 2016; Genc et al., 2016; Simons et al., 2018). The impact of this pandemic has changed human being activities in the world, particularly in the education sector. Every country is affected by this COVID-19 pandemic, The government made new policies regarding teaching processes, from traditional classrooms to online classrooms to decrease interaction and activities among people. But, the readiness of schools has a particular problem to conduct online learning. The problems are the conditions of school location,

parents' money budget to prepare facilities for their children, and the students' ability to use Information Technology.

This research tends to know the students' experiences before and after online learning activities. It is hoped that this research finding can be a contribution to a regulation setting in terms of the way to teach students in online classes. This qualitative research used questionnaires and interviews to gather research data. The goal of this study was to fill the gap in the existing research on the perception of students in the online classroom. As the previous research in various research filed noted different students' perception in terms of online classes. This research investigated the students' experiences in online classes in North Sumatera -Indonesia. The following research questions guided the researchers to find the relevant data which are needed: 1). What experiences do students have in the online classroom? , 2). How do students' perceptions describe online classes?

2. METHODS

This research aimed to expose the experiences of students who learned in online classes, and their perceptions toward online classes during the covid-19 pandemic. The Method used in this research was the Mix method. There were 24 students from two different Senior High Schools taken as respondents in this research. The data for this study were collected by using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data from questionnaires were analyzed by applying Likert-scale as quantitative data, and the data got from interviews as qualitative data were analysed by using Miles and Huberman's interactive data analysis model; step 1. Data Collection, step 2. Data Reduction, step 3 Data display, and step 4. Drawing conclusion (Miles & Huberman (1994: 16).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There were 24 students taken as respondents from two senior high schools, they responded to the questionnaires which are categorized into two main points namely the learning experiences and their perception toward the online classes. The findings will be discussed based on their correlation towards motivation and engagement in online classrooms. The followings are the percentage of the students' responses.

3.1 *The students' experience in the online classroom*

The students' experiences who followed the online class during the Covid-19 pandemic can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Students' experience in the online classroom

Questions	Answer Choice	Responses (%)
What application are used by students?	WhatsApp	62,5
	GroupZoom	16,7
		8,3
	Google Meet	12,5
	Others	
How long do students spend in online learning?	Same as schedule	83,3
	Faster than the time schedule	4,2
	No time limitation, because of doing tasks	12,5
How does the teacher handle theonline class?	Only explanations.	4,2
	Explanations and tasks	83,3
	Only tasks	12,5

Does the teacher use media in	Always	16,7
The learning process, such as games,	Sometimes	62,5
videos, etc.?	Never	20,8

Based on the findings above, it can be seen that students 62,5 % of students used WhatsApp group as the media in online learning, and only 16,7 % and 8,3 % used other media such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom. Based on the findings, most participants responded that they used WhatsApp as a tool for their online learning (62,5%). This proves that teacher has been aware about the effectiveness of using WhatsApp as an online learning platform to support online learning. Therefore, this finding is in line with previous studies which found that WhatsApp can be used to improve students' learning outcome, students' motivation, engagement and academic achievement, and can facilitate communication, collaboration, feedback and supports (Sari & Sari, 2021; Rambe & Bere, 2013; Dreyer & Haufaus, 2020). For the duration of online learning, 83,3 % of students learning English based on the time schedule. Meanwhile, 12,5 % of students do not have time limitations because teachers only give tasks.

Most of the teachers explained the materials and gave them tasks (83,3 %) and the teachers just gave tasks (12,5 %) in the teaching-learning process. It showed that teacher explained the material by giving video, recording, documents, and tasks. Furthermore, teachers sometimes used various media or strategies in online learning, such as video, games, etc. Only 16,7 % of teachers apply various media and strategies, and 20,8 % of teachers never used various media in the learning process.

From the data, online learning is effective for students because WhatsApp groups just give chance to students to communicate by text, meanwhile online classroom should have face to face and interaction in learning, so if there were students who could not yet understand the material, students could share and students could get feedback directly and clearly. In addition, most of the teachers only gave explanations and tasks in the learning process and seldom applied various media or strategies inonline learning. Based on the interview result, teachers explained the material by giving a recording or video from the internet. It can be an obstacle because teachers cannot play their role in the learning process. After the teachers gave the explanation in recording or video form and tasks, the learning process was finished when the students submitted their tasks. The result of the questionnaires responded by students noted that most of the time used to talk about the task given to students

3.2 The students' perceptions describe online classes.

The questionnaires were given to the 24 students dealing with perception can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Students' Perception in the online classroom

Questions	Answer Choice	Responses (%)
Is online classroom effective or not?	Effective	31,7
	Ineffective	39,2
	Sometimes	29,1
Do you understand the material inonline classroom?	Yes	20,8
	Little	12,5
	No	66,7

Do you still want to have online class?	Yes	4,2
	No	70,8
	No answer	25,0

From the data above, only 31,7 % of students believed that online class was effective, 39,2 % (ineffective) and 29,1 % of students stated sometimes. This is an interesting finding because in the previous question, the student mentioned that WhatsApp was the application which was mostly used by the teacher in delivering online learning. Furthermore, many studies show the benefits of using WhatsApp to engage and motivate students (Sari & Sari, 2021; Rambe & Bere, 2013; Dreyer & Haufaus, 2020). In this study, many students agreed that their online class was ineffective (39.2%). Based on this finding, it can be concluded that even though previous studies reveal the effectiveness of using WhatsApp, the participants in this study consider the online class as ineffective even with using WhatsApp as the online platform to support their online learning.

This conclusion is also supported by 70.8% of students who do not want to attend an online class in the future and 66.7% of students who mentioned that they could not understand the materials well. This finding reveals that students' motivation and understanding of the learning materials decreased after having an online class with WhatsApp as the most common platform to use. Since engagement has a positive relationship with students' satisfaction (Meyer, 2014), students' dissatisfaction towards their online learning in this study proves that teacher should be more creative in using another platform to engage students' participation and to increase students' motivation so that they can see the benefits of online learning and want to participate in other online learning classes in the future.

The interview's qualitative results revealed that the students had difficulty in mastering the course material due to the absence of direct interaction with the teacher. Maths was deemed the most challenging to comprehend, according to their statement. Additionally, they frequently had difficulties with internet connectivity, resulting in decreased motivation and a lack of enthusiasm to engage in the learning and teaching process. The majority of students expressed a preference for traditional in-person classes over online classes. The majority of students felt that online classes were ineffective.

4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to examine and contrast the perspectives of students in online and offline settings. Students prefer traditional (i.e., not online) classroom settings due to a number of factors, including a lack of motivation to learn and poor internet connection, difficulty understanding course materials, and inefficient teacher-student contact. The results of this study can be used by school administrators to craft new policies aimed at boosting student motivation and interest in online learning. In addition, the online teaching-learning process might benefit from students' reflective writing and appraisal of their own experiences and perspectives. Based on the results of this study, it appears that developers of educational systems should think about creating a system to facilitate students' online learning and meet the needs of a sufficient number of educational institutions.

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