

STUDENTS' VOICES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC OF COVID-19

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Abstract

The pandemic of Covid-19 has massively switched education delivery in the world from face-to-face learning to online learning. This qualitative study aimed to investigate students' voices of the implementation of online learning during the pandemic of Covid-19 in higher education context. There were eight students of English Study Program Universitas Riau involving in this study selected using the purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and documentation. The participants' voices were thematically analysed in terms of their learning participation, accessibility, material and assignment delivery of the online learning. This study found that the students view online learning as learning experiences that bring both benefits and challenges. Students perceive online learning is a good choice to prevent the spread of coronavirus and a good time to improve their digital skills, but they were not really enthusiastic about its implementation. There are four major obstacles they faced, such as internet access, monotonous teaching method, limited interaction, and ineffective material and assignment delivery. The findings imply that online learning delivery in Indonesia still needs more improvement for better performance in the future.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, the world was shocked by the outbreak of a virus named Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19). The virus was first coming from the Hunan seafood market in Wuhan city (Adnan et al., 2020). The virus infects the human respiratory tract and is an infectious

disease. It becomes worst since the beginning of 2020, as the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak the global pandemic (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). Therefore, Joko Widodo as the government of Indonesia responded to this by making some policies regarding social distancing. Every single thing should be done from home; work, study, religious practices, and so on (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020).

In education sector, millions of schools were forced to physically closed. UNESCO data (2020) reports that 91.3% or around 1.5 billion students in the world cannot attend school as usual (Daud & Hardian, 2021). In Indonesia, the implementation of education has undergone during the pandemic Covid-19 (Ilmi et al., 2020). The process of teaching and learning has been paused since March 16, 2020. Then, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is expected to make an innovation to the teaching and learning process, that is online learning. Universitas Riau, in particular, also conducted online learning as mentioned in the Circular Letter Number 2/UNI9/SE/2020 about the Prevention of Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19).

Online learning is an integrated technology system that has become a widespread practice over the years (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020). Additionally, people get used to living with technology. Then, it is expected that the teaching and learning process will be easier if the lecturers and students are familiar with it. However, there might be some challenges and difficulties faced by the students. As reported by Daud & Hardian (2021), the challenges and difficulties are not only about limited internet access and media platform used, but also learning strategies and interaction among students and lecturers.

According to Wart et al., (2020) it is important to know students' perceptions if there are new teaching approaches and technologies applied. Perception is defined as an experience of an object, event, and relationship gained by resuming data and predicting message which involves attention, hope, motivation, and memory (Rakhmat, 2000). Taylor (2002) investigates students' participation can be seen from their pattern in accessing and contributing to online discussion. Mason (1994) classified students' participation in online learning into three distinct groups such as active participants, lurkers, and those who do not participate (Vonderwell & Zachariah, 2005). Hopefully, this study can be a representative of students' perception of the implementation of online learning.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive qualitative study was carried out in the English Study Program Universitas Riau. This method aims to describe any particular thing or situation and its characteristics. Additionally, the goal of qualitative descriptive is a comprehensive

summarization of specific events experienced by someone or a group of individuals (Lambert & Lambert, 2013).

The data were collected through semi-structured-interview and documentation from 2017—2020 generations students of English Study Program Universitas Riau. There were eight students selected using purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique refers to a selection of respondents based on some characteristics rather than randomization as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Profile

Student	Students' grade	Place during online learning	Experience in online learning	Skill in technology
S1	Freshman (2020)	Outside Pekanbaru	First experience	Advance
S2	Freshman (2020)	Outside Pekanbaru	First experience	Advance
S3	Sophomore (2019)	Outside Pekanbaru	First experience	Medium
S4	Sophomore (2019)	Pekanbaru	First experience	Advance
S5	Junior (2018)	Outside & Pekanbaru	First experience	Advance
S6	Junior (2018)	Outside Pekanbaru	First experience	Advance
S7	Senior (2017)	Pekanbaru	First experience	Medium
S8	Senior (2017)	Outside Pekanbaru	First experience	Advance

In this study, the students' voices of online learning were investigated on four themes: participation, accessibility, material and assignment delivery, and challenges they found during online learning. Therefore, the questions during interview were designed relating to these topics. The interview was conducted online using WhatsApp audio call. Then, the documentation was collected from students' digital portfolio activities during online learning.

The data were analysed following procedures of qualitative data analysis from Miles & Huberman (1984), such as data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. To do this, the data were reduced through the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the rough data obtained. Then, the data were narratively displayed to make a tentative conclusion.

To validate the data, this qualitative data used data triangulation and methodological triangulation. This study compared the data collected from different respondents through interview and documentations. Then, the conclusion was made.

FINDINGS

The recorded data in this study show students' voices during online learning emerged into four themes, such as students' participation, accessibility, material and assignment delivery, and students' strategies dealing with challenges.

A. Students' Participation

Data show that students' responses of the implementation of online learning in terms of participation lie between neutral and negative responses. In other words, participants of this study perceive that online learning has some benefits and challenges at the same time. None of them voiced that online learning is completely positive in terms of students' participation.

Table 2. Students' Voices of Participation

Student	Perception		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
S1		√	
S2	√		
S3		√	
S4	√		
S5		√	
S6		√	
S7		√	
S8		√	

Here are some positive perceptions mentioned by students regarding to the implementation of online learning. Students perceive online learning is a good choice to prevent the spread of corona virus, moreover they will not be worried about their safety because they are allowed to participate from home. It also indicated the flexibility of learning, where students can participate through the use of digital devices and it provided a technology learning opportunity. Meanwhile, students perceive it negative since they got difficult to participate regarding to internet access is not sufficient, limited space to interact, and a lot of material and less effective learning.

Furthermore, some common reasons that made them enthusiastic to participate in online learning are the teaching styles of the lecturers and kinds assessment given.

It depends on the lecturer. If the lecturer looks enthusiastic when teaching in class, I will feel the same. I will prepare myself and anything before class is started. However, if the interaction between lecturer and students is bad, such as just saying “halo” through WhatsApp group and directly giving assignments, then I don’t feel enthusiastic at all.

(S3, interview)

B. Accessibility

Chick et al. (2020) pointed out that using the technological application can be a solution for learning from home during the pandemic of covid-19. It makes students well informed and educated. For this reason, issues of accessibility is necessary to address. Students’ voices of accessibility during the implementation of online learning can be seen below.

Table 3. Students’ Voices of Accessibility

Student	Voices		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
S1		√	
S2		√	
S3		√	
S4		√	
S5		√	
S6		√	
S7		√	
S8		√	

In this study, students use smartphone and laptop to access online learning. From their voices, either laptop and smartphone have its strength and weakness.

I use a laptop and a smartphone. For any learning activities that required using a camera like video conferences from Zoom Meeting and Google Meet, I prefer to use laptop. But for any other else I will use a smartphone. It depends on the need.

(S7, interview)

Students tend to use laptop for doing assignment and attend video conference during online learning. They perceive a laptop seems designed to do work, and students not worried about the distraction of the pop-up of the notification.

Meanwhile, students perceive the smartphone is used due to its flexibility and easiness to comprehend some features in it. However, smartphones are limited in memory capacity. Then, some students have to extra effort to install and re-install certain applications.

Regarding internet access, it comes from Wi-Fi and the provider (sim card) internet package. The quality or strength of internet access are varied, it depends on the weather and area of respondents live. Some students have stable internet access, some others do not. Agung (2019) argue that commonly happened in some region because of limited infrastructure and public facilities.

My hometown cannot reach a good internet network. It gets worse when the power goes out, fallen trees hit the electricity and bad weather.

(S1, interview)

Internet not only can be accessed through Wi-Fi but also provider (sim card), that is internet package. Luckily, the government give free internet quota for students in Indonesia, including students in this study. They perceive it was very helpful for them to save their money.

I've got a free internet package and it helped me to save money.

(S5, interview)

Besides the digital device and internet access, students perceive there is something else needed to access in online learning. They are students' readiness, either mental or physical to adapt with the current situations.

Due to online learning being new, students are required to be able to adapt and be ready in every particular activity during online learning.

(S1, interview)

The most important is healthiness, then sufficient internet and digital devices according to the needs.

(S2, interview)

C. Material and Assignment Delivery

Material and assignment delivery is important as a measure of the success of the teaching and learning process. Whether students comprehend the material and its direction; whether the activities conducted are interesting or not; and the assignment given including its amount, kinds of assignment, and feedback from the assignment given. All those things are needed as an evaluation and can be a reference for a better learning process in the future.

According to Huang (2020), the material can be absorbed depending on teaching methods during online learning and internet access. Students will comprehend the material when the lecturer explains then make a discussion with students and give the assignment.

Table 4. Students' Voices of Comprehension Material

Student	Voices		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
S1		√	
S2			√
S3		√	
S4		√	
S5		√	
S6		√	
S7		√	
S8	√		

The results show students perceive their comprehension of material delivery is depend on the lecturer's teaching method. It will be easier for students when the lecturer is willing to explain it and make a good interaction between students—lecturer and students—students. Moreover, when the lecturer has a rule about students' discipline like students have to turn on their camera during video conferences.

Depends on the lecturer's teaching style. It is easier to comprehend the material if the lectures use learning application nicely so the class will not monotone, then there is an interaction between students and lecturer, and the most important thing is lecturer should discipline; apply some rules like every student should turn on their camera during video conferences.

(S3, interview)

This current study reported lecturers' teaching methods in delivering the material are variated, such as video conference, group discussion through WhatsApp chatting, group discussion through Google Classroom, reading material from PDF files, e-books or PowerPoint, quiz from Quiziz and Quizlet, and some others only attend to a meeting to give assignments.

However, the comprehension of material delivery is not only the responsibility of the lecturer. But students themselves, therefore they make some discussion with their friends after the class and look for additional references and learn it independently.

I quite understand the material well. Because the students in my class care about each other, so we often discuss every material we are studying. We usually discuss when the class is over in our WhatsApp group.

(S2, interview)

If I only expect an explanation of the material from the lecturer, the level of understanding is lacking. Therefore, students should also look for additional references and learn independently.

(S5, interview)

On the other side, students' voices of assignment delivery can be seen as below.

Table 5. Students' Voices of Assignment Delivery

Student	Voices		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
S1	√		
S2		√	
S3	√		
S4	√		
S5		√	
S6		√	
S7	√		
S8	√		

Students perceive they have a lot of assignments during online learning. The kind of assignments given is varied, such as words documents, PowerPoint, making a video, and looking for journals. According to some previous study, students said they have a lot of assignments, similar to this research, the assignments given increase dramatically from offline learning. It happened because almost all lecturers give assignments at every meeting. Therefore, the assignments from various lecturers make the numbers pile up and burden students.

Almost all lecturers give assignments at every meeting. With a number that I think is also a lot. Perhaps the lecturer assumes the more assignments given, will represent the material from each chapter. Although I don't think it's effective. Moreover, in this online learning, the number of tasks is more than usual.

(S7, interview)

Students perceive they take a long time while processing of making an assignment, especially for video assignment. Because they have to repeatedly take videos to get a good one and then edit the video before it is submitted. Therefore, it is better if lecturers are mind to considerate the deadline of any assignment they were given.

After giving assignments, it would be better if the lecturer gives sufficient feedback. Students perceive feedback is useful, they will learn and fix any mistakes they probably made in the assignments, and it can be their motivation to join online learning. There are

many ways to give feedback, it could be praise, suggestions, and criticism. In this study, students reported some lecturers provide sufficient feedback, some others not.

Yes, but not all lecturers provide feedback. Sometimes given personal suggestions or discussed in class. This becomes our reference and motivation for us as students to learn harder and do assignments well. However, some lecturers never provide feedback but only give continuous assignments.

(S3, interview)

D. Students' Strategies Dealing with Challenges

The following section shows students' strategies in dealing with the challenges they found during the implementation of online learning in each theme.

- *Doing an Extra Study*

The recorded data show that students got difficult to interact during online learning due to the limited space. Then, it also affected to the quality of communication during teaching and learning process. Therefore, miscommunication usually appeared, especially for those who have limited English skill.

To overcome the challenge, some students need to have the initiative to improve their English skills. Some of them, for example, did an extra study like attending an English course to improve their English skills.

I joined English course to improve my skills.

(S3, interview)

- *Making an Excuse*

Some students sometimes use the bad internet networks as an excuse for not joining the class. Students perceive that students' participation cannot be well controlled during online learning. Some students underestimate learning and affect their behavior, becoming less discipline. They believe that almost all students did the same thing.

I will make a bad network as an excuse for not joining the class. I believe that I am not the only one do this, almost all of my friends often do this.

(S1, interview)

This kind of excuse is definitely unacceptable. Therefore, lecturers need to make sure whether their students are really struggling with an internet connection or not.

- *Finding better location for better network*

Many students are struggling with the internet access. It can be caused by the weather or their place is not accessible for internet network. To overcome this problem, some students sometimes have to go to another village to get a good network for access online learning.

My challenge is the internet network. Regarding it, I cannot do anything. I will attend classes as best as I can. For example, when the network is bad while video conference, I will take classes with the camera off. Sometimes I also have to go to other villages to get a good network. If I really cannot join the class, I will confirm it with the lecturer.
(S5, interview)

- *Managing Time*

Students perceive that a lot of material and assignment delivery is challenging for them. A bunch of material makes them have non-stop learning. Sometimes, some lecturers make an additional class or move the schedule. In addition, there are too many assignments given.

Students voiced that those situations affected their health, which usually makes them have physical fatigue. To deal with this, students reported that they tried hard to manage their time well, to make it balance between study, break, and other routines.

.....The trigger is because of the non-stop online learning and a large number of assignments, so I find it difficult to manage my time and forget to take a break. Since I have become more concerned with myself and always put my health first before starting or taking classes.
(S2, interview)

With all of the challenges, participants in this study hope that online learning would end soon. Even if online learning should be continued, they voiced that there must be some aspects that need to improve. These aspects include good interaction or teamwork between students and lecturers. Both students and lecturers need to improve their skills in operating digital devices; the assignments given are not too much; students should get sufficient internet quota for free, so the teaching and learning process will be meaningful and interesting.

I hope for good teamwork between lecturer and students. Which are students should increase their learning motivation and lecturers are willing to learn about operating some learning applications for a meaningful and interesting class. Then, I hope face-to-face learning will implement as soon as possible.
(S3, interview)

I hope this online learning will end soon because I feel that it is less meaningful and I feel many difficulties when it is compared to face-to-face learning. Then, if this online learning still has to be continued, I hope that both lecturers and students will try to

find good learning methods so that activities in class are not monotonous and learning objectives can be achieved properly.

(S7, interview)

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study indicate similarities with some other studies which indicate that online learning has many issues to address. Students experienced almost the same problems during online learning implementation such as the lack of availability of infrastructure that affects connectivity, the compatibility of technology, ineffective material and assignment delivery, and also space of the interaction. Connectivity or internet access still be the main obstacle discussed in every study. Students face difficulties, especially for those who live in the area that cannot access a good internet network. In addition, although previous studies found that students have to pay more expensive for internet data, students in this research reported that they already got sufficient internet data from the government. However, the quality of the internet connection still depends on the area where they live and also the weather. As Agung (2019) argued such conditions commonly happen in the least-developed region. Which related to students' voices of this study, they perceive that internet access is challenging

In this current study, students reported that they already have good technology skills. They can operate both of smartphones and laptops. It indicated that students are not really struggling with the technology. Similar to the study conducted by Giatman et al. (2020), the implementation of online learning is relatively good regarding to the use of technology. It shows that technology gives positive impacts on online learning and offers synchronous and asynchronous teaching delivery (Murtiningsih, 2020). However, even if students in this research considered that their skills are good in technology and operating digital, they argued that the interaction space is limited. Students perceive it was really hard for them to make a good interaction during online learning. Similar phenomenon was reported by other studies such as Agung and Surtikanti (2020). Meanwhile, Giatman (2020) in his research stated that the improvement in the quality of network infrastructure give the flexibility for students to interact each other. In other words, it can be seen that students might experience the same problems in online learning. However, the voices occurred were different.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that students perceive online learning is a new experience for them. Students' voices of participation, accessibility, and material and assignment delivery reflect their acceptance on the online learning yet there are some issues that need to be addressed by relevant parties such as the government and univeristies. Students view

online learning is a good choice to prevent the spread of covid-19 and good for human health, students learn how to find their own motivation during online learning, and it improves their skill in operating digital.

Students get enthusiastic at the beginning of online learning, but their enthusiasm slowly wanes over time. Many students considered that online learning is less effective rather than face-to-face learning. They realized that online learning has limited space to interact, so they find many challenges during online learning, Such as participation, accessibility (digital devices and internet access), and material and assignment delivery. In the end, students hope that the pandemic of Covid-19 would end soon, so they will be able to access face-to-face learning again and hopefully be more meaningful for them.

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