Challenges of English online learning during covid-19; a survey study of secondary school students' perceptions

Dian Asmi Setoningsih[1],[*]

[1]University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia
[*]Corresponding author: dianasmi76@gmail.com

ABSTRACT The Covid-19 pandemic currently occurring has changed conventional classrooms to online classrooms. This current study is a descriptive quantitative study consisting of an analysis of a survey on secondary school students' perceptions of their English online learning during the pandemic. One hundred seventy-three students of Tazkia IIBS Malang were involved in this study. The data were in the form of students' perceptions of online learning in terms of accessibility, E-Learning Platform, material delivery, assignments delivery, and participation. The result was then summarized into tables, charts, and narrative descriptions. The study discovers two significant challenges faced by students in the English online class. They are teachers' material/instructions delivery and the assignments' time deadline. In terms of material and assignment delivery, the study suggests teachers employ interactive and engaging E-Learning platforms to participate more actively and enthusiastically, especially for secondary school students who haven't been accustomed to virtual learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic of Covid-19 has infected the entire planet on a wide scale. This pandemic has disrupted every corner of life. Various industries, including education, have been affected by this crisis. A Circular Note for schools and other educational institutions was provided by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, to temporarily stop traditional teaching and learning practices in schools and enable lessons to be performed from home e-learning. He suggested that teachers use different platforms for e-learning, such as Rumah Belajar, Quipper School, Ruang Guru, Google Classroom, Zoom, etc. Today, in Indonesia, these e-learning platforms are becoming popular because they are widely used and built.

One of the most recent and possible issues is online learning. As an integrated technology in education, online learning has become a wide-spread activity over the years. Earlier studies reflect its practice. Fedynich, Bradley, and Bradley (Fedynich et al., 2015) examined the perceptions of online learning among graduate students. The result indicates that contact between students and the teacher has a significant effect on their satisfaction. Other challenges found included adequate support for learners linked to campus services and the need for varying educational design and delivery to promote students' willingness to learn. On the other hand, students were extremely pleased with the Instruction's consistency and organization using appropriate resources. The role of the teacher was described as being crucial to the students' satisfaction (Phillips & Stern, 1986).

The popularity of online education in Indonesia is spreading in small towns and villages, and rural areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. The best conditions of its implementation are implemented in a comprehensive range, depending on each region's characteristics. To perform online learning, the Internet is a crucial prerequisite (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020).

Implementing the Home Study assigned by the Ministry of Education and Culture in schools, especially for rural areas, poses a particular obstacle. Responding to the government direction, Tazkia International Islamic Boarding School Malang teachers conducted both offline and online learning. This school is located in Malang, East Java, but the students are from various districts. Among its 948 students, 413 students decided to return to boarding school/pesantren with their parents' consent. The remaining 535 students choose to have distance learning from their home.

Because the only interaction students have with their teachers is via the Internet, some new challenges come into play such as; students withdraw or participate minimally, teachers cannot pick up nonverbal and behavioural signals, teachers cannot easily share their feelings with their students and may find it more difficult to express their enthusiasm or encourage or show concern (Shahzad et al., 2020). So, these students may be vulnerable to disengagement before the course even starts. This research aims to dig deeper into the perceptions of students when conducting online English learning at home.

Here, the perception of the students can be defined as the opinion formed after getting a specific experience that requires adjustment. Therefore, in this study, the students'

TABLE 1. Respondent Details

Subject Characteristic	Percent
Students' Grade	
7	28.3%
8	11%
9	6.4%
10	18.5%
11	24.3%
12	11.6%
Skill in Technology	
Poor	12.7%
Medium	72.8%
Advanced	14.5%
Online Learning Location	
In Java	68.2%
Outside Java	31.8%

perceptions focus on the involvement, accessibility, materials, delivery of assignments, and the student's online learning platform relevant to their needs and condition. This study is expected to probe the following research question: 1. How are the students' perceptions of English online learning during Covid-19?

2. METHOD

In this Covid-19 situation, this research is carried out to examine secondary school EFL students' perceptions of online learning. It was descriptive quantitative research. The survey was employed on 173 students of Tazkia International Islamic Boarding School (IIBS) Malang in evaluating English online education conducted by the teachers.

The respondents of the survey were representatives of all grades in Tazkia IIBS Malang. The population of the research was 535 students who are doing virtual learning at home. By applying convenience sampling, 173 students or 32.3% of the total population have participated as respondents of the survey. The sample number refers to the theory suggested by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) that a minimum of 20 per cent of the population should become the sample.

Based on the data, the majority of the students have good technology literation and were already familiar with the technology and online learning platform they are using during online learning. The brief descriptions of the respondent can be seen in Table 1.

3. RESULT & DISCUSSION

During Study from Home, it was found out that all Academic and Islamic Studies subjects in this school were taught virtually. All English classes were also taught virtually using Zoom Meeting for 120 minutes a week. In this online course, there would always be the teacher's lecturing sessions and assignment delivery. The overall classification of the data obtained from the participants is presented in the following topics:

3.1 Accessibility

Based on the result of the survey in terms of accessibility, it was found out that students have no issue with internet access at home. All students could access the Internet well, even though 23.7% of students had insufficient signal strength. Because of limited infrastructures and public facilities, such conditions were prevalent in the less developed region (Agung, 2020). This insufficiency sometimes led to delay in material or instructions delivered to them. While all students who had good signals already master the material, the teachers needed to re-explained to those who got into internet trouble.

The students replied, based on open-ended questions about the use of internet data, that most lecturers gave assignments that made them search, upload, edit, and submit files to different e-platforms. As a result, they complained that the internet data/quota was running out.

The use of the laptop was more common than handphones for students. Unfortunately, 1.2% of students said that their devices were not compatible, and 22.5% had less compatible devices. Even though the number was less than those who have compatible devices, these students often struggled to join the online learning and do their assignments so that they would be left from their friends. The data about students' accessibility can be seen in Table 2 and Table 3.

The Use of E-Learning Platform In terms of the E-Learning Platform, it was found out that the English teachers have used various kinds of platforms that support students' virtual learning. All of them are used based on the students' needs. Among all those platforms, the students most favourite one was Quizizz. It was so popular among students since it facilitated students to do the assignment or quiz in a fun way. Students found it engaging since the flashy animations and the competition they create with real-time leader boards. Using Quizizz, students could complete the work at their own pace and remain highly engaged throughout the quiz. Moreover, students could install this app through the Play Store on their Android phones so that either student who used phones or laptops during online learning would not have any significant issues accessing this platform. The data about the use of the E-Learning platform can be seen in Figure 1.

3.2 Material Delivery

According to the survey data, it was found out that the majority of students thought that the given materials were comprehensive and easy to understand. This was because
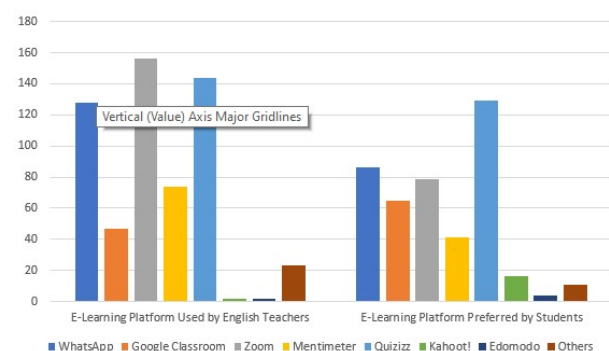

FIGURE 1. The Use of E-Learning Platform

TABLE 2. Result of Research

1. Accessibility		**3. Level of Assessment**	
Internet Access at Home		Assignment	
Available	100%	No	3.5%
Non-Available	0%	Yes	96.5%
Sufficiency of Signal Strength		Assignment Relevancy	
Stable	76.3%	Not Relevant	1.7%
Unstable	23.7%	Relevant	98.3%
Device Used for Online Learning		Assignment Instructions	
Hand phone	15.6%	Not Clear and Precise	0%
Laptop	84.4%	Less Clear and Precise	21.4%
Compatibility		Clear and Precise	78%
Not Compatible	1.2%	Feedback	
Less Compatible	22.5%	No	26%
Compatible	76.3%	Yes	74%
2. Level of Assessment		Students' Perception of Assignment Given	
Comprehensive Material		Easy and Fun	11.6%
Not Comprehensive	1.2%	Fun and Challenging	46.8%
Less Comprehensive	24.3%	Challenging and Stressful	41.6%
Comprehensive	74.6%	**4. Level of Assessment**	
Material Relevancy		Students Involvement / Participation	
Not Relevant	1.2%	No Involvement	1.7%
Less Relevant	7.5%	Less Involvement	36.4%
Relevant	91.3%	Good Involvement	61.8%
Discussion / Question & Answer Session		Students' Interactive Responses	
No	1.2%	Passive	41.6%
Yes	98.8%	Active	58.4%
Problems faced by Students		Students' Enthusiasm	
Teacher's Fast-Paced Teaching	42.7%	Not Enthusiastic	6.4%
Teacher's Pronunciation	22.1%	Less Enthusiastic	37.6%
Teacher's Voice Volume	34.1%	Enthusiastic	43.9%
Others	1.1%	Highly Enthusiastic	12.1%

all teachers provided discussion or question-answer sessions to the students' online class. This session allowed both teachers and students to interact well so that the students could master the material taught more comprehensively. However, in this English online learning, students' biggest challenges as teachers' fast-paced teaching. It can have a negative effect on the learner if the pace is either too slow or too fast.

In a class with multiple individuals, the students' learning speed would vary from one to another. The students felt that the teachers taught and moved from one material to another too fast so that not all students could keep it up nicely—another issue faced by students as teachers' voice volume. The students argued that sometimes their teacher's voices inaudible, even though they were not sure it was because of internet trouble or the teachers themselves. Teachers' unclear pronunciation was another challenge faced by students. This was especially when the teachers spoke new or unfamiliar vocabulary during lecturing. This would cause a delay for students to take notes or comprehend the delivered topic.

3.3 Assignment Delivery

According to the survey data, it was discovered that the assignment delivery by the teachers had run well. However, based on the answer to the open-ended question related to assignment delivery, the students complained about the task deadline that was too short for them to accomplished. This made the task more complicated than it was, and students found it stressful to complete the assignment on time. When they received more than one homework in a day with a limited deadline, the students tended to give up easily and spend less cognitive effort on the task. Teachers needed to consider each task's time allocation so that the students do not feel a burden by it. Fortunately, the students said that most teachers gave them feedback on their tasks. This will boost students' enthusiasm and motivation to do the task better shortly.

3.4 Student Perceptions

Discovering the result of students' participation, the result demonstrates that most of the students were actively engaged in online learning. Most students also stated that they were enthusiastic about online learning conducted by English teachers.

TABLE 3. Result of Research

Level of Assessment	
Assignment	
No	3.5%
Yes	96.5%
Assignment Relevancy	
Not Relevant	1.7%
Relevant	98.3%
Assignment Instructions	
Not Clear and Precise	0%
Less Clear and Precise	21.4%
Clear and Precise	78%
Feedback	
No	26%
Yes	74%
Students' Perception of Assignment Given	
Easy and Fun	11.6%
Fun and Challenging	46.8%
Challenging and Stressful	41.6%
Level of Assessment	
Students Involvement / Participation	
No Involvement	1.7%
Less Involvement	36.4%
Good Involvement	61.8%
Students' Interactive Responses	
Passive	41.6%
Active	58.4%
Students' Enthusiasm	
Not Enthusiastic	6.4%
Less Enthusiastic	37.6%
Enthusiastic	43.9%
Highly Enthusiastic	12.1%

During this pandemic, online learning was deemed enjoyable to teach and to compensate for learning. The abundance assignment, however, was killing them because all lecturers gave them the task. Also, most of them were still secondary school students who were most comfortable with face-to-face learning. Even though students thought this online learning seemed to be fun in terms of the attractiveness of e-learning platforms, they learned English, but they argued that face-to-face learning was way more engaging for them. Some students even expressed that they almost gave up online learning due to the difficulty of understanding the teachers' material explanation and the deadline of assignments. Indeed, carrying out online learning has many implications. Educational administrators and teachers need to consider a lot of things to fulfil students' needs.

4. CONCLUSION

The pandemic of COVID-19 has created a big tide of the paradigm shift in Indonesia's education system: from physical to internet-based classrooms. The digital classroom appears to be the perfect answer for the sake of people's health.

While previous literature (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020) often found students' challenges related to internet connection availability and technology sustainability. However, here, at Tazkia IIBS Malang, it focuses more on teacher's materials and assignments delivery. The material and assignment delivery were classified as good practice. On that note, Zoom and Quizzes are highly recommended because they are easy to use and free. They have some features to engage students' learning.

The current study concludes that some EFL students are not prepared for this rapid shift in terms of teaching and learning style (Fedynich et al., 2015). The teachers needed to pay more attention to the type of assignment they would give. The task should be fun, challenging, meaningful, and relevant to the delivered material in the online class. The deadline was the one who got a lot of complaints from the students. Teachers needed to consider each task's time allocation so that the students do not feel a burden by it.

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