

Students' Perceptions on Online Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Fathia Natasa, Erni, Fadly Azhar

^{1,2,3}Universitas Riau; Pekanbaru, Indonesia

¹²³Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan,
Universitas Riau

¹fathia.natasa5144@student.unri.ac.id ²erni.rosda@yahoo.co.id ³fadlyazhar57@gmail.com

Abstract

The impossibility to continue the conventional classroom created an inevitable situation where online learning is the most suitable solution at the moment to keep up the learning process amidst the pandemic. It is presumably familiar to students, but the sudden change of online learning being applied sporadically to regularly arise an issue of how the students perceive, access, react to it and the challenges they face. This study aims to find out students' perceptions on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subject of the study is students of the English Study Program of Riau University. Descriptive approaches to quantitative methods were used in this study. Google form was used to collect the data and there were 127 students that participated in filling out the questionnaire. SPSS 26 was used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that students' perceptions were negative toward online learning. The three main reasons affecting the result were the lack of enthusiasm, internet sustainability, and technical issues.

Keywords: online learning, perception, students, pandemic, COVID-19

1. INTRODUCTION

In late 2019, a virus was first identified in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province, China. This virus was named COVID-19 and soon became a pandemic worldwide. The first time Indonesia was exposed to this virus was in early March of 2020. In response, the Government of Indonesia has approved Large Scale Social Restriction or Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar and the closure of schools transforming the conventional classroom to internet-based classroom, or widely known as online learning. The impossibility to continue the conventional classroom created an inevitable situation where online learning is the most suitable solution at the moment to keep up the learning process amidst the pandemic. Considerably, online learning benefits the students because they do not have to attend the classes in person, it also helps to train self-reliance and encourage the interaction from one student to another. In another aspect, online learning is expected to suppress the plummeting cases of COVID-19. However, there are few things that should be put into consideration while implementing online learning, such as the attitude of students in accepting online learning, the materials and assignments that are given by the lecturers, or how to keep them to stay motivated and ways to keep them out of distraction. Living to its name, online learning is internet-based learning that allows students to attend the learning process comfortably anywhere without being present in the physical classroom. However, the simplicity of online learning

slowly started to decrease, that recently students had to carry learning activities online unexpectedly. It is presumably familiar to students, but the sudden change of online learning being applied sporadically to regularly arise an issue of how the students perceive, access, react to it and the challenges they face. The objective of this study is to find out the students' perceptions on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The subject of this study is the English students of the English Study Program of Universitas Riau. Aparicio et al., (2016) divided online learning into two main aspects, education and technology. Perception is how an individual think and views a certain phenomenon then processes the thinking to become a corresponding thought (Walgito, 2010). Perception creates our attitude toward a certain phenomenon or event. Perception is important for the huge impact on understanding human behavior, relating to other individuals, recognizing circumstances, patterns, and objects. In this research, perception will be categorized into two kinds, positive and negative perception.

According to Slameto (2010), there are two factors influence someone's perception, internal that comes from the psychological of an individual, and external factor that affected by the surrounding. Slameto (2010) also divide there are four principles of perception, they are in the following:

1. Perception is relative, not absolute
2. Perception is selective
3. Perception has arrangement
4. People perceptions may be different

According to Burns et al (2017), perception is divided into two kinds:

- a) Positive perceptions manage the growth of self-confidence, environmentally conscious, crises tolerance, and self -consciousness.
- b) Meanwhile, Negative perception is disposed to focus on their desires, trying to acquire and prove their self-worth. Negative perceptions are the tendency to achieve an individual's desires and prove their worth.

Montague, (1997) stated that students' perceptions are the impression that the students have toward a certain thing or an event. Thus, this study would like to know the students' perception of English students' technology background, perceived benefits and drawbacks of online learning, accessibility, materials and assignments delivery, and technical issues while implementing learning methods online. The result of this study is presented with negative and positive perception. This study will be necessary for educators to evaluate and create improvement to their teaching method. According to Petegem et al. (2007), students' perception is vital for measuring learning results. Freiberg and Stein (2005) mentioned that the students' perception is a way to observe and explain the classroom condition which is essential to the purpose of evaluation and teaching development.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive approaches to quantitative methods were used in this research. Sugiyono (2011) explained that descriptive research is conducting a research to find out the value of one or more variables without creating a comparison or connecting to the other variable. Population determines the main focus of the research that contains an extensive collection of individuals with the same characteristics (Sugiyono, 2013). The population of this research was active students of the English Department of Riau University. With the total number of 458 students from admission year 2017-2020. According to Sugiyono, (2013), the researchers determine the population to be studied and conclude. Population determines the main focus of the research that contains an extensive collection of individuals with the same characteristics.

A research instrument is used to get accurate measurement of the data of the research. According to Creswell (2009), a research instrument is a tool to collect, measure, and analyze the data of the research. In this research, the questionnaire was the research instrument. The type of questionnaire that was used was an online questionnaire in the form of google form. Online questionnaire was considered efficient in terms of cost and time, especially since it was not possible to distribute the questionnaire directly due to the pandemic. The questionnaire was adapted and modified from Agung & Surtikanti, L. Smart & J. Cappel, Keller & Cernerud, A. Eldeeb, R & Vinayak Mahajan. There were 26 items in the questionnaire focusing on English students on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research was conducted after the researcher granted permission to conduct a research on April, 30th 2021. The teaching-learning process was currently limited to be done conventionally, so the research was conducted online. Then, the researcher proceeded to create the questionnaire on Google Form regarding English students' perceptions on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. On May 5th 2021, google form was distributed to the chairman of every class through WhatsApp. The time given for students to fill out the google form was approximately 2 weeks.

The sampling technique that the researcher used in this research is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is one of the types of non-probability sampling that is often used in a research. It is also called the accidental sampling since the sample is taken from certain criteria such as, accessible in terms of location or internet service, available at the moment in time, and the person's willingness to participate in the research (Dornyei, 2007). The number of participants who participated in this research is 127 participants. A research instrument is used to get accurate measurement of the data of the research. In this research, the questionnaire was the research instrument. Fraenkel & Wallen (2012)

mentioned that the subjects fill out the questionnaire by writing, usually choosing an answer from an answer sheet given to them. The type of questionnaire that was used was an online questionnaire in the form of google form. Online questionnaire was considered efficient in terms of cost and time, especially since it was not possible to distribute the questionnaire directly due to the pandemic. The questionnaire was adapted and modified from Agung & Surtikanti, L. Smart & J. Cappel, Keller & Cernerud, A. Eldeeb, R & Vinayak Mahajan. There were 26 items in the questionnaire focusing on English students on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scoring that was chosen in this research was Likert scale. The Likert scale is well known to measure attitude assessment. Students' perceptions are considered as positive if most responses agree or strongly agree, and the perception is considered negative if most responses disagree or strongly disagree.

The data analysis technique gathers, collects, and transforms data into meaningful information, suggests conclusions, and supports decision-making (Moleong, 2018). There were several steps the researcher took in analyzing the data. First, the collected responses from google form were exported into a table using Microsoft Excel 2016. The purpose of this action was to simplify the researcher in reading the data. Second, the data was converted from lexical into numerical form. Third, the numerical data was input into SPSS 26 for Windows and was configured using a descriptive statistics tool. Finally, the result was interpreted through tables. Explanation is also provided.

Validity test was implemented to see whether the instrument of the research is valid or not. According to Heale & Twycross (2015), validity is the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study. All the items were examined using Microsoft Excel 2016 to know if they were valid or not. The statement is considered valid if the value of significance is higher than the value in the R table and vice versa. The researcher chose the value of the R table by seeing the number of participants participating in the research. According to Pearson's correlation table, if the number of participants is 127, then the value of the R table is 0.1729. The writer found that 11 items out of 37 were invalid. The invalid items could not be used and were dropped, and the other 26 statements remained valid. SPSS 26 was also used to find out the reliability of the research instrument and it was found that the coefficient of the Croanbach-Alpha is 0.807. For further details can be seen on the table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.807	26

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Enthusiasm, Participation, and Background

Table 3.1 Students' Enthusiasm, Participation, and Background

No		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	My skill in technology is advance	127	1	5	3.73 (positive)	0.81
2	I find online learning is amusing	127	1	5	2.68 (negative)	1.10
3	I am enthusiastic about online learning	127	1	5	2.69 (negative)	1.17
4	I actively respond during online classes	127	1	5	3.50 (positive)	1.11
5	I find online learning is useful	127	1	5	3.51 (positive)	1.05
6	I am motivated to use online learning in further study	127	1	5	2.80 (negative)	1.24
7	I find online learning is effective	127	1	5	2.76 (negative)	1.14
11	I often get distracted while studying online	127	1	5	2.08 (negative)	0.99

Table 3.1 above reveals the obtained data from the questionnaire regarding students' perception in the matter of enthusiasm, students' participation, and background. From 8 items, 5 items obtain negative responses while the remaining 3 gain positive responses. Item number 11 is an unfavorable statement.

The table shows that the students participate actively during online classes (item 4 with the mean of 3.50). However, it does not indicate that they are pleased (item 2), enthusiastic (item 3) and oftentimes goes sidetracked (item 11) during online classes. Online learning is considered useful (item 5) but is not fully effective (item 7) in its implementation. The disparity of the response can be assumed that online learning is the only

method available to be applied in the midst of tumultuous pandemic situations because teaching learning programs must continue. Bozkurt et al., (2020) stated that the implementation of online learning within the pandemic situation is an emergency remote learning. In a short amount of time, there is a lot of preparation to be made that neither the students, the lecturers, nor the campus were ready. The lecturers had to explore which learning style might suited best to the class situation and the students had to adapt to it which is why it is felt less effective. The students also show no interest in applying online learning for further study (item 6). Despite all that, their knowledge of the internet is sufficient (item 1). Davis (1989) mentioned that there is a certain process that must be considered before adopting online learning, the benefits, the simplicity, and comfort that a person feels toward online learning.

2. Accessibility

Table 3.2 Accessibility

No		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
13	Internet access is available at my house	127	1	5	3.89 (positive)	0.99
14	I use WiFi while doing online classes	127	1	5	2.98 (negative)	1.49
15	The internet signal during studying online session is unstable	127	1	5	2.32 (negative)	1.05
16	I have my laptop and mobile phone to participate in online learning	127	2	5	4.09 (positive)	0.79
17	My device is compatible to support learning platforms	127	1	5	3.78 (positive)	0.84

Table 3.2 above presents the accessibility for students to participate in online classes. In the digital era we are today, possessing gadgets is likely one of the basic needs of human life. Given the unfortunate pandemic situation where the schools are closed and applied online learning, gadgets become crucial as the learning instrument to support online learning. Luckily, the

students of the English Study Program of Riau University own their own gadgets such as smartphones and laptops (item 16 and 17).

Riau University is located in Pekanbaru but not all the students settle in Pekanbaru. Many of them live in different areas in Riau Province where some of the districts are located far from the city. Fortunately, internet connection is available in most of the students' homes. It can be seen by the mean value of 3.89 on item 13. However, internet accessibility in secluded areas does not necessarily guarantee the quality of internet connection. Item 15 shows that the students experienced internet instability during online classes

The internet is considered as one of the main factors to accomplish the purposes of either teaching or learning (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020). Some regions in Riau may experience poor internet connection during conducting online learning. Network connection is the most discussed issue that surfaces during online classes. Network connection may also appear as some considerable challenges to either lecturers and the students (Peyton in Egbert, J., & Smith, 1999). The data of students' participation showed that the students are committed to engaging during online classes even though they claim to experience bad signals. Most of the students use internet data instead of WiFi at their home. Classes are conducted every day on weekdays that may have led to insufficient internet data for the students. The stability of internet strength and internet data may lead to unsuccessful online learning (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020).

3. Teaching Materials and Assignments Delivery

Table 3.3 Teaching Materials and Assignments Delivery

No		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
18	The materials given by the lecturer is easy to understand	127	1	5	2.80 (negative)	0.94
19	I can access the materials anywhere and anytime	127	1	5	2.93 (negative)	1.00
20	The lecturer uses English and Bahasa Indonesia during the lesson	127	2	5	3.91 (positive)	0.70

21	The lecturer provides discussion, Question and answer sessions, and feedback on the discussed topics	127	1	5	3.73 (positive)	0.84
22	The assignments are relevant to the material beforehand	127	2	5	3.60 (positive)	0.69
23	The lecturer gives clear instruction to do the assignment	127	1	5	3.66 (positive)	0.99
24	The English teacher gives feedback to the submitted assignment	127	1	5	3.04 (neutral)	1.00

Table 3.3 describes students' perceptions regarding teaching materials and assignments delivered by the lecturers. The result of this section is mostly positive perception. The students are satisfied with the learning style that the lecturers use to teach them. Discussion, feedback, question, and answer sessions are provided to create a room for the students to be actively engaged in the classroom (item 21) and the materials are taught using both English and Bahasa Indonesia (item 20). Yao et al., (2020) mentioned that educators such as teachers and lecturers play an important role in teaching effectiveness. The role is not only transmitting knowledge to the students, but also as a companion and mentor for them.

The students also perceive that the assignments are related to the materials beforehand (item 22) and the lecturers give out clear instructions to do the assignments (item 23). The responses are mostly neutral for item 24 meaning that there was uncertainty whether there was feedback or not for the submitted assignments. However, the materials are not easy to understand (item 18) and cannot be accessed any moment they like (item 19).

4. Perceived Benefits and Challenges

Table 3.4 Perceived Benefits and Challenges

No		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
8	I can access limitless course related to the materials online	127	1	5	3.65 (positive)	0.96
9	Implementing online learning as permanent method of study will improve my performance	127	1	5	2.32 (negative)	1.07
10	Online learning helps me understand the lesson at my own pace	127	1	5	2.94 (negative)	1.08
12	I often can't attend the online classes due to the instability of internet connection	127	1	5	2.61 (negative)	1.20
25	I experienced losing my completed assignment during Online English class a lot	127	1	5	2.94 (negative)	1.19
26	I experience problem while navigating the learning platform	127	1	5	2.65 (negative)	1.12

This section describes the benefits and challenges that the students perceive toward implementing online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online learning allows the students to access a lot of materials on

the internet (item 8). However, the students of the English Study Program of Riau University experience more shortcomings rather than benefits of online learning. The students are reluctant that applying online learning permanently would improve their learning performance (item 9) since they find difficulty in understanding the lesson independently. Other challenges table 3.4 describes are instability of internet connection (item 12), losing completed assignments (item 25), and experiencing problems in navigating online learning platforms (item 26).

4. CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that perceptions on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is negative. This conclusion was obtained after analyzing the result of the questionnaire. The researcher identified three main reasons affecting the result: the lack of enthusiasm, the sustainability of internet connection, and the recurrence of technical issues experienced during online learning. The lack of enthusiasm led to another issue like the decrease of concentration.

There are also good things found such as device compatibility, teaching materials, and assignment delivery. Most students claimed that they own at least one laptop and one smartphone that are able to conduct online learning. Students can enhance their enthusiasm by creating a comfortable learning space of their own. Setting the right mindset can help to build a positive atmosphere. Being indifferent and keep whining toward online learning do not make online learning get better by itself. Online learning is a self-paced study that the students can use to be more explorative in finding their own skill and interest. The distraction while doing online classes are sometimes inescapable for students. Students can record or screenshot the lesson then make notes to what the lecturers explain beforehand to get studying later.

The sustainability of internet connection cannot be solved by the students alone. There should be an intervention from the government to improve the quality of internet access in rural and remote areas. When the internet itself is accessible, it is not the case with the strength of internet connection. students do not have to be hesitant to voice out their issues and ask for advice to the lecturers. Hopefully, they will understand and be flexible toward students' situations. There are many aspects of online learning that still need to be improved and those necessary improvements cannot be done overnight. The government plays an important role in funding and supporting this form of learning to ensure that all of the students get equal opportunity at getting quality education with online learning. Moreover, a good interaction between students and lecturers is also needed to accomplish the main goal of online learning.

Acknowledgement

I'd like to show my appreciation to my consultants who had helped and guided me amidst the writing of this journal.

Author Contribution Statement

FN carried out the conception of the study. FN,FA, and Erni arranged the data collection. FN arranged the data analysis and interpretation with the help of FA and Erni. FN drafted the article. Erni and FA provided critical revision of the article. Erni and FA provided approval to publication.

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