Indonesian EFL Students' Perception towards Online Learning during Covid 19 Pandemic

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyoroti gambaran bagaimana mahasiswa EFL memandang penggunaan *platform* pembelajaran daring selama pandemi covid-19. Metode survei digunakan peneliti untuk melakukan studi deskriptif kepada 88 responden (mahasiswa EFL Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang (UMP)). Kuesioner tertutup digunakan sebagai instrumen. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa Mahasiswa EFL UMP memiliki persepsi positif terhadap pembelajaran daring di masa pandemi Covid-19. Mereka mengaku E-learning cocok digunakan dalam situasi masa Pandemi Covid 19. Lebih lanjut, mereka menjelaskan bahwa pembelajaran secara daring memudahkan mereka dalam mengerjakan tugas karena mereka mudah mengoperasikan *platform*/aplikasi. Meski demikian, mereka tidak mempermasalahkan gagasan untuk tetap menggunakan E-learning setelah pandemi Covid 19 berakhir. Hal ini disebabkan oleh beberapa masalah yang dapat muncul selama E-learning seperti; koneksi internet lambat dan mahalnya biaya pembelian kuota. Kemudian, mereka mengklaim bahwa E-learning tidak dapat meningkatkan prestasi belajar mereka, baik untuk kinerja maupun kemampuan bahasa mereka. Kesimpulannya, Mahasiswa EFL UMP sepakat bahwa E-learning layak digunakan selama masa Covid 19, namun mereka tetap menganggap bahwa hal itu tidak lebih baik dari metode konvensional dimana guru dan siswa dapat bertemu dan berkomunikasi secara langsung dalam waktu yang bersamaan. dan tempat.

Kata Kunci: *Persepsi mahasiswa EFL, Pembelajaran Daring, Pandemi Covid 19*

Abstract

This study highlighted the description of how EFL university students perceive the usage of online learning platforms during covid-19 pandemic. The survey design method was used by the researcher to conduct a descriptive study to 88 respondents as EFL students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang (UMP). An online close-ended questionnaire was used as the instrument. The result of the study found that UMP EFL Students have positive perception on online learning during Covid 19 pandemic. They admitted that E-learning is suitable to be used in the situation of Covid 19 Pandemic period. They clarified that online learning makes them easier to do their assignments since it is easy for them to operate the platform/application. Nevertheless, they did not deal with the idea of continuing to use E-learning once the Covid 19 pandemic is over. It was caused by some problems could appear during E-learning such as; slow internet connection and the high cost of purchasing quotas. Furthermore, they claimed

that E-learning could not improve their learning achievement, both for their performance and language skills. To sum up, UMP EFL Students agreed that E-learning is appropriate to be used during the Covid 19 period, but they still consider that it is not better than the conventional method where the teacher and students can meet and communicate directly at the same time and place.

Keywords: *EFL Students' Perception, Online Learning, Covid 19 Pandemic*

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease of 2019 is rapidly spreading over the world, particularly in Indonesia. This virus was originally discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and was formally called Covid-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) on February 12, 2020 (Liu, Kuo, & Shih, 2020, p. 328). It has become the most dreadful year in human history. It is caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) at first, and later it develops into a highly contagious and transmissible disease (Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir, & Siddique, 2020). On March 2, 2020, the first case of Coronavirus in Indonesia was recorded when a dancing instructor and her mother were infected by a Japanese visitor. The number of instances increased dramatically after that, prompting President Joko Widodo to ask all residents to work from home, study from home, and pray from home. The COVID-19's global spreading has affected all human activities, including the learning process (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

Education is one of the most hit sectors due to the corona virus pandemic. The global education system has been altered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Huda, Wahyuni, & Fauziyah, 2021). The Corona Virus is finally being recognized by the educational community. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), nearly 300 million students around the world disrupted their school activities, risking their future educational rights. Thirteen countries, including China, Italy, and Japan, had closed schools across the country the day before to try to stop the virus from spreading. It affects almost 290 million students as cited in Deli and Allo, 2020.

As a result, online learning has emerged as an alternative answer. According to Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014) online learning or E-learning refers to the use of digital resources for teaching and learning. Students can learn anywhere and at any time using technological tools. Training, knowledge delivery, and motivating students to interact with their peers are all part of online learning.

To keep learning on schedule, several higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world have completely converted to online instruction. Both teachers and students have faced difficulties as a result of the move. Teachers and

students have been forced to study and learn from their homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To deal with modern life, all students must learn English as a universal language. Educators and researcher have discovered that technology plays the most important role in enhancing learners' awareness, giving knowledge, and making learning English more convenient. Online learning can help students improve their linguistic skills, develop their ability in punctuation, grammar, and spelling, and improve their performance in writing, listening, speaking, and reading. Additionally, integrating technology into education can help English teachers and students by digitizing all content and making it available on demand. (Hazaymeh 2021, p.501).

Indonesia is one of the countries experimenting with the adoption of EFL online programs in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. Since the education policy makers agreed to implement a rule to turn offline classes into online classes in mid-March 2020, the use of online classes has been decided nationally in Indonesia. It was advised that all schools and institutions turn offline classes to online classes for a longer period of time. Some institutions have even decided to conduct all of their classes online for the rest of the semester. Teachers and students react in a variety of ways to this unexpected choice.

This methodological difference raises concerns about how students' perspective about this new system. Sabti and Chaichan (2014) found that people have different perspectives about using computers to study English. Male students indicated less positive perceptions toward the use of computer technology in studying English, while female students expressed positive attitudes. Both male and female students, on the other hand, had a positive impression of the utility and convenience of use of computer technologies in English learning processes.

Kirovska-Simjanoska (2019) investigated EFL students' preferences for learning models in a similar vein. They valued the teacher's presence in the classroom and the social contact, according to the findings. Students, on the other hand, saw online activities as useful and efficient ways to study course material. In terms of the efficacy of digital technology for language learning, Nugroho and Rahmawati (2020) found that social networking sites (such as the mobile app Instagram) were identified as a useful tool for improving students' writing skills. Meanwhile, the fact found by Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2020) the majority of the difficulties that students encountered during online learning were connected to network access. It was challenging to get adequate and reliable signals, especially for students who resided in rural locations. A student even mentioned that her village lacked a Wi-Fi network, forcing her to purchase an internet package from a store. However, because of Covid-19, many stores were forced to close. As a result, enrolling in online programs was more difficult for her.

Online learning has been treated in *Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang* primarily in the English Education Study Program, and it uses a synchronous and asynchronous approach, although the method is still blended learning. The synchronous method is carried out lively by use of an application that allows lecturers and students to connect and talk simultaneously. Video calls and WhatsApp are two of the most commonly utilized technologies and applications. The asynchronous learning strategy, on the other hand, takes place at different times and does not require lecturers and students to be linked directly. Email, online browsers, and YouTube are some of the most commonly used technologies.

As a consequence, identifying EFL students' perceptions of *UM Palembang* as the largest private university in Palembang on the real-world conditions of online learning during the Covid 19 Pandemic period is vital. As a result, it is critical to investigate how and to what extend students' perceptions of the online learning experience changed during this pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. English as Foreign Language (EFL)

English is spoken as the primary language in most countries around the world, it is known as a universal language. Therefore, it becomes an important international language to be mastered. Although English is a foreign language in Indonesia, it plays a significant role in our society's daily lives. This evident is reflected in Indonesian education. English is one of the subjects taught to students at all levels, from elementary to college. English is the setting of a foreign language for Indonesians who do not speak it. According to Harmer (2007, p.19), EFL referred to scenarios in which students were studying English in order to communicate with any other English speakers in the world, whether they were tourists or businesspeople. Teaching and studying English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to situations in which English is a subject taught in school but the child does not use it outside of school (Dewi, Yawisah, & Siregar, 2019). EFL is customized of pupils at a certain moment or event. The students are part of a worldwide target-language community when they use English for international communication, especially on the internet. They are prepared to communicate in the future utilizing English as a global language. Because English has such a strong influence in daily life, it is necessary to study it from an early age.

According to the preceding definitions of EFL, it could be concluded that EFL activities refer to studying English as a subject in the classroom and when the students do not utilize English outside the classroom.

2. Online Learning

The technology of information and communication (ICT) has evolved in the sector of education (Gumartifa, Larasati, & Aurelia, 2020). It is difficult to overlook

the existence and significance of technology to English instruction in today's digital world, when everything is controlled by the internet. Videos, podcasts, worksheets, E-learning, applications, and websites, as well as other digital resources, are quite beneficial. As the number of English learners grows, more modern tools and technology are being integrated into the teaching process, which is a good thing. Students nowadays frequently learn the materials like as videos, podcasts, worksheets, e-learning, applications, and websites, all of which are available via electronic devices such as computers or mobile phones.

Arkorful and Abaidoo, "online learning" or "E-learning" refers to the use of digital tools for teaching and learning (2014). Online learning is a type of distance education that blends electronic and internet-based technology (ICT) into the learning process. It is a program for organizing classes to reach a large and diverse set of students, the usage of internet-based technology characteristics, which are primarily dependent on the availability of information technology (Damayanti & Irwan, 2021).

According to related studies, online learning is widely implemented in education in general, and it plays a significant role in English language learning in particular. Moreover, Ghirardini (2011) claimed that online learning is appropriate for learners with limited mobility. In order to stop the spread of the covid-19 pandemic, people must limit social interaction, which includes the teaching and learning process in classrooms. However, education must continue, and one way to do so is through the use of an online learning system. Students and teacher do not have to meet with this system and the teaching and learning process can continue. Therefore, it could be concluded that the term "online learning" refers to education that occurs over the internet. It's commonly referred to as "E-learning."

3. Perception

Humans are known to be capable of processing information gathered from their surroundings. They have the ability to evaluate what they see, feel, and think. According to Qiong (2017), perception is the process of becoming aware of or comprehending sensory information. Perception is preceded by the sensing process, which is the process of persons receiving stimulus through sensory devices, also known as sensory processes. However, the process does not end there; the stimulus is sustained, and the next process is perception (Walgito, 2010).

Based on the definitions of perception provided above, the researcher can conclude that students' perception is the way students interpret the picture and comprehend what they are feeling.

METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive method where the data collection method was a survey method, which includes collecting information from participants using a questionnaire distributed through googleform. There were 88 active English

Foreign Language students from English Education Study Program *Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang* chosen as the respondents of this study consisting of semester 2, semester 4, semester 6 and semester 8. The questionnaire was adopted from the related study written by Yana and Putri (2021). There were five components used in the questionnaire; basic information about E-learning, students' perception on the relative advantage, and students' perception on the online learning of use, and students' perception on the e-learning compatibility, challenge, and obstacle, and students negative perception on E-learning. The frequencies and percentages were computed during the analysis, and the results were displayed in the form of figures and tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 88 active students of English Education Study Program, *Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang* answered the distributed questionnaire, consisting of 75 (85.2%) female and 13 (14.8%) male. The distribution of the respondent gender is shown in figure 1.
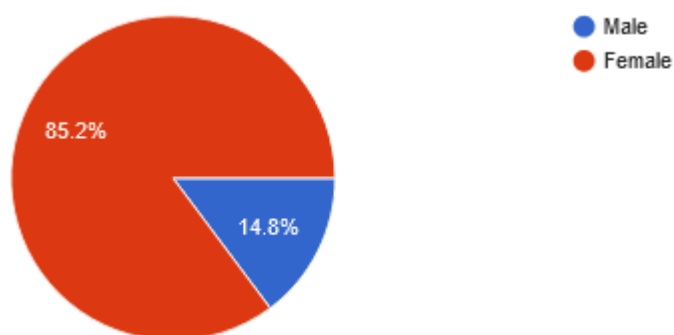

Figure 1. The Percentages of Respondents Gender.

The first component of the questionnaire where asked about students' basic information about E-learning. The first question of this aspect was "What is electronic tool you often use in E-learning?". It was found that the most tool used is smartphone where 86.4% or 76 students answered smartphone while there were only 13.6% or 12 students answered laptop. Then, it could be seen that there was no student used PC or other tools in E-learning.
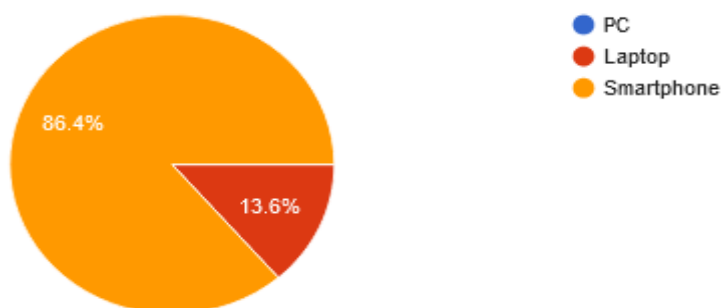
Figure 2. The Percentages of Electronic Tools used by EFL students of UM Palembang during E-Learning.

The second question was about students' prior experience of E-learning, the question was "Have you joined E-learning before the rise of Covid 19?". There were 65.9% or 58 students answered "NO" and 34.1% or 30 students answered "YES". Related to this question, the third question was asked about the familiar platform or application of online learning student have used before Covid 19 pandemic period. It showed that WhatsApp Application is the most familiar application of online learning used before covid 19 where 48.9% or 43 students chose *WhatsApp Application*, 42% or 37 students chose *Google Classroom*, 6.8% or 6 studens chose *Schoology*, and 2.3% or 2 students answered Edmodo.
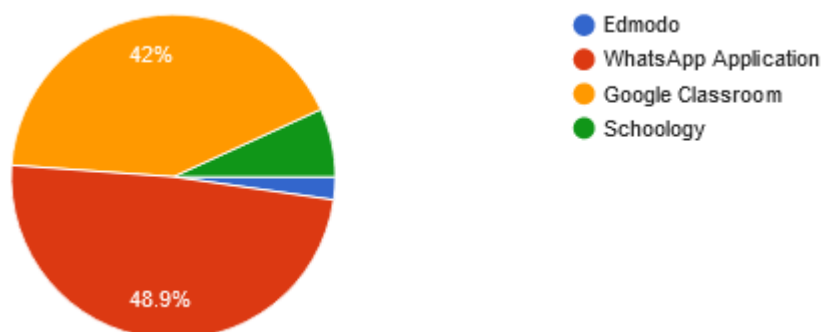
Figure 3. The Percentages of Familiar Platform or Application used before Covid 19 Pandemic by EFL students of UM Palembang.

The second component of the questionnaire was about students' perception on the advantages of online learning. This section covers six statements where the students should choose strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) for each statement that was matched with their perceptions. There were 42 students (47.7%) agreed that *"E-learning class is suitable to the situation of Covid Pandemic period",* 26 students (29.5%) chose "neutral", 16 students (18.2%) chose "strongly agree, and 4 students (4.5%) chose "disagree". It means that the majority of students believe that using electronic tools in this case is E-learning tool to learn is appropriate in a pandemic coronavirus situation. Furthermore, 38 students (43.2%) chose "neutral" to the statement *"E-Learning class is better that face to face class"*, 30 students (34.1%) chose "disagree", 12 students (13.6%) chose "agree", 6 students (6.8%) chose "strongly disagree", and 2 students (2.3%) chose "strongly agree". It can be concluded that, while students believe e-learning is appropriate for use in the Covid 19 period, this does not imply that e-learning classes are better than the traditional classes where the teacher and students can meet and speak directly at the same time and place. The next statement was *"E-Learning allows me to complete my task more quickly"*. The result obtained that half of the students are neutral (48 students or 54.5%), 29 or 33% of students agreed, 7 or 8% of students disagree, 3 or 3.4% of students strongly agreed. It can be stated that online learning is not the most important element in students' assignment completion. Students' personal time

management appears to play an essential impact in their task submission time. It could be concluded from the last statement "*E-Learning gives me big chance to manage my schedule*", most of the respondents or 41 students (46.6%) agreed to this statement, 32 students (36.4%) stated neutral, 8 students (9.1%) stated disagree, 4 students (4.5%) stated strongly agree, 3 students (3.4%) stated strongly disagree. Moreover, most students did not agree to the statement *"E-Learning improves the quality of my performance"*. it could be seen from the result that 42 students (47.7%) chose "neutral", 19 students (21.6%) chose "agree", 17 students (19.3%) chose "disagree", 8 students (9.1%) chose "strongly disagree", and there were only 2 students (2.3%) chose "strongly agree". These responses were also reflected to the statement "*E-Learning makes my English language skills better"* where most dominant answer was "neutral" as 37 students (42%), and "disagree" as 24 students (27.3%). From these statements, it could be concluded that UM Palembang EFL students did not claim that E-learning could improve their learning achievement, both for their performance and language skills.

Table 1. *UM Palembang* **EFL Students' Perception of the E-learning advantages.**

Question Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
E-learning class is suitable to the situation of Covid Pandemic period.	16	42	26	4	-
E-Learning class is better that face to face class.	2	12	38	30	6
E-Learning allows me to complete my task more quickly.	3	29	48	7	1
E-Learning improves the quality of my performance.	2	19	42	17	8
E-Learning makes my English language skills better.	-	19	37	24	8
E-Learning gives me big chance to manage my schedule.	4	41	32	8	3

Furthermore, the next component of the questionnaire was students' perception on the online learning of use. It consisted of two statements *"Online learning makes me easier to do my assignment."*, and "*It is easy for me to operate the platform/application in the online learning".* The percentages of students' answer were distributed in Table 2.

Table 2. *UM Palembang* **EFL Students' Perception on the Online Learning of Use.**

Question Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
Online learning makes me easier to do my assignment.	5	37	30	8	5
It is easy for me to operate the platform/application in the online learning.	7	46	31	4	7

The data presented in Table 2 shows that more students consider that online learning makes them easier to do their assignments. It could be seen from the highest chosen option was "agree" as 42% of students (37 students) followed by "neutral" as 34.1% of students (30 students). It is related to the next statement "It is easy for me to operate the platform/application in the online learning" where more than half of students or 52.3% (46 students) chose "agree". As can be seen, *UM Palembang* EFL students admitted that online learning makes them easier to complete their assignments since it is easy for them to operate the platform/application. This finding was supported by Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) where they admitted that many people have gain benefits from the efficiency of the advanced technology to do online learning. They said that using technology made the teaching and learning process easier.

In addition, the next part of the questionnaire was investigating students' perception on the E-learning compatibility, challenge, and obstacle. There were three questions in this part. The answers were presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *UM Palembang* EFL Students' Perception on the E-Learning Compatibility, Challenge, and Obstacle

Question Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
If Covid 19 Pandemic is over, online learning is still better to be applied.	-	17	24	32	15
Slow internet connection was being problem for me	31	37	13	1	6
Online learning affected to my monthly budget.	18	36	23	8	3

Table 3 shows that students disagree (32%), not only with the compatibility of online learning, but also with the idea of continuing to use E-learning once the Covid 19 pandemic is over. It was caused by slow internet connection (37 students agreed and 31 students strongly agreed) and it affected to their monthly budget (36 students agreed).

Students' negative perception on E-learning was investigated in two statements of the last part in the questionnaire. Majority of students are not sure or marked neutral (50% or 44 students) that *"the platform used in the online learning has stressed them in studying"*. The remaining half, 20 students disagreed and 19 students agreed. Additionally, most of them felling not sure (39.8% or 35 students) and agree (31.8% or 28 students) that online learning made them socially isolated. To sum up, *UM Palembang* EFL Students' admitted that they have a tendency towards neutral to positive perceptions on the use of online learning.

Table 4. *UM Palembang* **EFL Students' Negative Perception on E-Learning**

Question Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
The platform used in the online learning has stressed me in studying.	4	19	44	20	1
Online learning makes me socially isolated	9	28	35	16	-

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the finding above, it could be concluded that *UM Palembang* EFL Students have positive perception on online learning during Covid 19 pandemic. This could be interpreted from the response got from the distributed questionnaire. The students admitted that E-learning is suitable to be used in the situation of Covid 19 Pandemic period. They clarified that online learning makes them easier to do their assignments since it is easy for them to operate the platform/application. Nevertheless, they did not deal with the idea of continuing to use E-learning once the Covid 19 pandemic is over. It was caused by some problems could appear during E-learning such as; slow internet connection and the high cost of purchasing quotas. Furthermore, they claimed that E-learning could not improve their learning achievement, both for their performance and language skills. To sum up, *UM Palembang* EFL Students agreed that E-learning is appropriate to be used during the Covid 19 period, but they still consider that it is not better than the conventional method where the teacher and students can meet and communicate directly at the same time and place.

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