

FROM 'LOCKDOWN' TO LETDOWN: STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF E-LEARNING AMID THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the need of exploring the students' perception of e-learning implementation of two English language subjects in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. This research is descriptive, and data were collected through online questionnaire. The participants were students of International Business of Padjadjaran University taking English for Business Purposes and Speaking for Business Purposes courses. The result of the analysis shows that 100% of students participated in e-learning, and 96.4% have accessibility in online learning. However, only 56% expressed satisfaction with the implementation of e-learning. As a result, the students' perceptions of e-learning are somewhat fruitful; further, it can promote flexibility, offer personalisation where learners can choose their learning path and pace. Fair assessment of students' perception in e-learning may grant a good precedent in the implementation of full online learning due to physical isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which alternatively can be done with the method of blended learning in the New Normal.

Keywords: *e-learning, students' perception, COVID-19, new normal*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian past has documented few pandemics involving cholera in 1820 and the Spanish flu in 1918-1919. Each one influenced the human being, and the government was concerned with the impact of the outbreaks on many sectors like economy and education. When this study commenced, another threat referred as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) by the World Health Organization (WHO) began to spread in Wuhan, China (Li et al., 2020). As of 13 June 2020, this nation has reported 37,420 cases with 2,091 deaths. The WHO pandemic counter in real time can be found on (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>). In response to COVID-19 outbreak, large-scale social restrictions (abbreviated Indonesian: *PSBB*) has been approved and school closures have been mandated to

subdue the spread of the virus. This 'lockdown'-like scenario has disrupted the traditional learning process nationwide and transformed it into an internet-based learning.

The Internet is undoubtedly indispensable and has become a part in almost everyone's life nowadays. Data from survey conducted by We Are Social organization in 2020 showed as many as 175.4 million internet users in Indonesia in which millennials are still the dominant factor. In fact, Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (*APJII*) once revealed in 2016 that college students are the largest internet user in Indonesia, and it more likely still happens today. Most of all, the Internet have been used by Indonesians for social media or television streaming purposes. However, since COVID-19 has been declared as a global pandemic in March 2020

(Ducharme) and as national disaster in April 2020, many students then had to abruptly use the Internet for studying and online learning.

Even though online learning has been favoured by teachers and lecturers to support or carry out the learning activity, not until recently has it become completely essential as students had been forced to study from home for the rest of the remaining term or semester. This sudden COVID-19 'lockdown' indeed has established and transformed the importance of online learning in education more than ever. The big question then points to how successful is the implementation of this dramatic change in learning method.

Besides full online learning, blended learning is an alternate learning approach combining the advantages of face-to-face learning and e-learning. In face-to-face learning, students can meet directly with educators. Therefore, direct contact can still occur in the classroom where students interact with their peers and teachers (Akkoyunlu & Soyulu, 2008). This in-classroom participation method is no longer practicable during COVID-19 pandemic due to its risk in transmitting the disease between one another. Many campuses eventually have issued circular letter obliging all parties involved in the learning process to do online learning. For many educators and learners, getting used to online learning from conventional one may pose some challenges and concerns.

Up to the present, various e-learning services have been available either independently managed by institutions using the Learning Management System (LMS) or freely provided by third parties. Even though initially e-learning's role is to complement conventional classes rather than replacing it (Carliner & Shank, 2016), according to Lee (2010) utilising e-learning can increase interactivity and learning efficiency because it gives students a high potential to communicate more with lecturers, peers, and access more learning material.

Padjadjaran University has been actually developing and using a Moodle

LMS named *Learning in Virtual Environment (LiVE)* which is officially recognized by the university. Despite the Moodle's frequent usage in some courses, many have chosen other online learning platforms or even going offline all the time. Since COVID-19 required all lecturers to implement online learning in their teaching, the implementation of this e-learning needs to be analysed more deeply. Thus, it is very critical to have knowledge regarding students' perception to the online learning implementation, so that educators can eventually formulate a form of e-learning desired by students in the future. This study aims to discover the perception of International Business students in Padjadjaran University towards the e-learning implementation of *English for Business Purposes* and *Speaking for Business Purposes* courses amid COVID-19 outbreak.

To date in present scholarly literature, some studies have been done related to e-learning and COVID-19; there are, in fact, some studies that analyse students' perception such as research conducted by Carrillo (2020) exploring the shifting to web lessons from a Mexican medical student point of view and Aswasulasikin (2020) investigating students' perception in online lectures. The study by Carrillo (2020) aims to investigate the use of online platforms to resume the classes and the variety of online courses to enhance, while Aswasulasikin (2020) had a study on how students' perceive the utilisation of technology devices in online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. After attentively reviewing these above research, none has appraised students' satisfaction and investigated their desire in the New Normal when the COVID-19 outbreak is over, so this study chiefly focuses on filling the gap in this section.

METHOD

This descriptive study was carried out by conducting online survey from International Business students in Padjadjaran University taking *English for Business Purposes* and *Speaking for Business Purposes* courses. Since it was not allowed to make physical contact due to the outbreak, online questionnaire was used as data collection technique, with the samples of some lecturers and class of 2019 students selected randomly. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended and open-ended questions for the students to answer. The first type of questions, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2013), are prompt to organise so that they are uncomplicated to systematise.

Additionally, open-ended questions were structured to know more about respondents' experience in the time of COVID-19 and their expectation for the implementation of e-learning in New Normal. Open-ended questions were used in order to explore students' problems in e-learning and to invoke their critical thinking on how e-learning will suit them well in the New Normal. Hudiono (2008) argues that open-ended would enable students to be more active in expressing their ideas and responses.

Google forms was used to create the online survey and distributed it by means of *LiVE Unpad* and social media messenger like *WhatsApp* to obtain replies from the respondents. A simple random sampling was hence applied to regulate the research instrument to selected targets. Further, the procedures carried out in this research are as follows:

1. *First*, the preparation of questionnaire instrument that will be used for data collection. The information contained in the questionnaire included: knowledge of e-learning, usefulness accessibility, and satisfaction in the implementation of e-learning, while the information included in the open-ended questions was the students' needs and desires in New Normal. The validity of the instrument

was then tested using expert judgement with two e-learning experts.

2. *Second*, collecting data with a validated questionnaire from class of 2019 students of International Business *English for Business Purposes* and *Speaking for Business Purposes* courses, in which they were randomly selected as many as 56 students and 6 lecturers. The obtained data were then analysed descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data acquired through online survey were presented as students' responses towards the implementation of e-learning amid COVID-19 and their aspiration for an ideal online learning in the future. First of all, despite their various origins and backgrounds, according to the lecturers, all students of International Business taking *English for Business Purposes* and *Speaking for Business Purposes* courses in Padjadjaran University took part in online learning in the time of COVID-19.

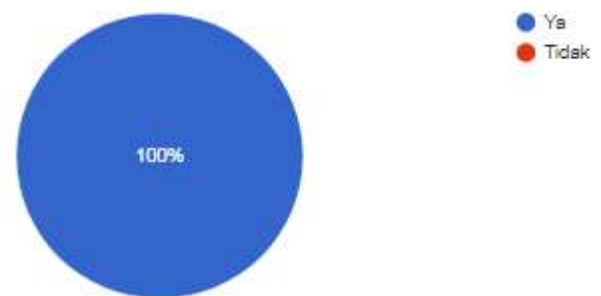


Figure 1. Students' participation in online learning amid COVID-19

The chart above shows that the students, as a whole, were able to become involved in online learning in whatever the situation. This means a good signal in which they still have motivation in learning or taking courses despite the self-quarantine. Some studies like one conducted by *hifzul Muiz and Sumarni (2020)* concerns that online learning in the time of COVID-19 may impact on stress level for students, in which averagely 60% of them suffered from it. This stress mostly came from the piling on the assignments given by their teachers.

Surprisingly, even though participation rate is absolute, not every student in the class does have facilities or technological devices supporting for online learning such as laptops, desktops, and/or mobile phones. In fact, few students (3.6%) are reported to have used their friend's laptop or mobile phone to do online learning in spite of (physical) distancing.

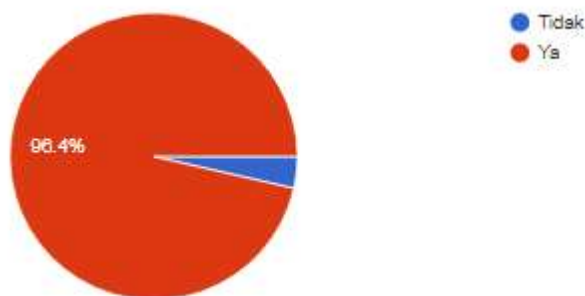


Figure 2. *Students having facilities in online learning*

In the process of e-learning itself, few students have risked their lives and made them vulnerable to be infected by COVID-19 albeit the recommendation of avoiding physical contact from others. Figure 2 above indicates these few students remain passionate about attending online lectures and completing assignments given by lecturers. In addition to lacking facilities, internet as the core element in online learning cannot be accessed in the places where the students were staying. The chart below suggests that as many as 3 respondents (5.4%) still needed to find internet connection before they could participate in online learning. This also add risk and might be burdensome for them since they had to go out of their places whilst many public places providing internet connection were temporarily closed.

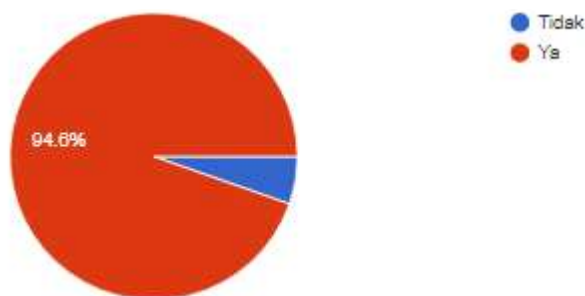
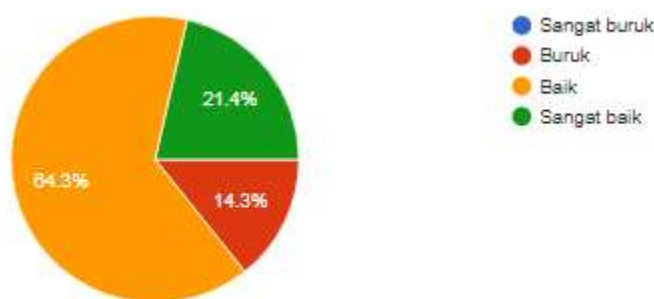


Figure 3. *Students having internet access for online learning*

As of the quality of the internet connection gained by the students are shown in figure 4 below. Overall, it seems that the internet was stable and reliable enough for most of the students for online learning. More than a half of the sample, 64.3% precisely, said that they had good internet connection, and other 21.4% even claimed that they had very strong internet connection. However, as many as 8 students (14.3%) stated that they had poor internet connection for online learning. This connection issue could turn to a bigger one since students are frequently required to do their assignment in specific or given time to mark their attendance. Some of them complained that their assignments have been declined since



their submission past the time limit.

Figure 4. *Students' internet quality in accessing online learning*

It goes without saying that poor internet or limited connection may result in poor learning process and performance since students' motivation could be influenced. Students' patience and determination are by all means tested when the online learning did not go well as planned or expected. Consequently, as seen in the following figure, 35.7% of the students objected to the internet costs incurred for e-learning in the time of COVID-19. From an open-ended question, a respondent proclaimed that she needed to spend around 2 GB or IDR 30.000 in a day for online learning, and she thought that it was quite uneconomical for a college student. The expense could be even more when there were a lot of video streaming

lectures, and not everyone could easily afford a mobile package for online learning. Consequently, recently many students have gathered to protest tuition costs during the coronavirus pandemic, and they also said that their parents' income has decreased as a result of the outbreak.

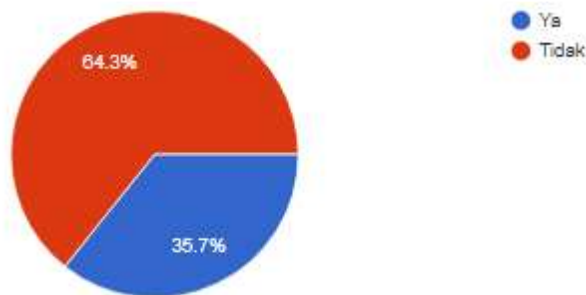


Figure 5. *Whether students mind on the internet costs incurred for online learning*

To tackle the widespread problem, Education and Culture Minister Nadiem Makarim actually issued a circular that gave the order to universities to aid their students by providing mobile packages. However, it seems that the policy could yet please the students who demanded to cut the tuition cost in response to 'study from home'. This financial issue was then worsened by the facts that the implementation of e-learning amid COVID-19 did not result in a positive outcome in terms of material understanding by the students. Figure 6 below reveals that even though more than a half of the sample (58.9%) said they understood the material given in online learning, as many as 35.7% were the opposite, and as a matter of fact the rests (5.4%) stated they really did not understand the material from e-learning.

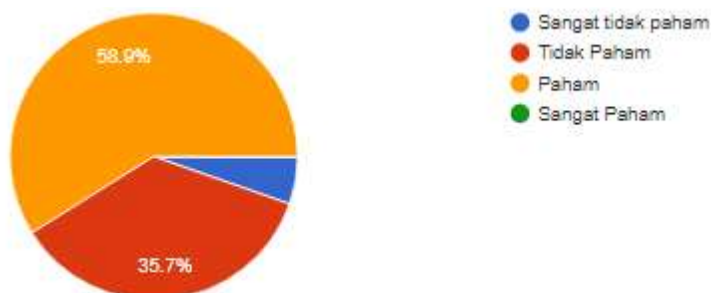


Figure 6. *Students' level of material understanding from online learning*

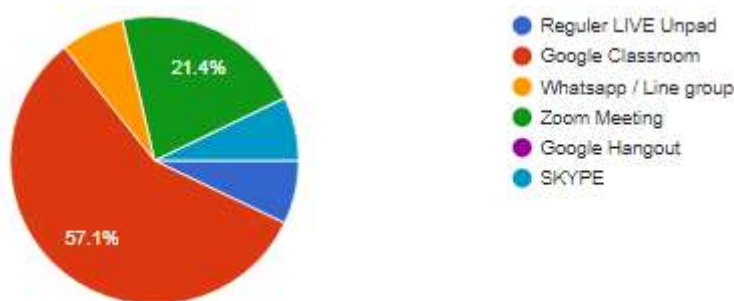
There are some reasons why the students' level understanding from online learning is rather worrisome. In more details, many respondents expressed that they favoured in-classroom lecture than online learning due to person-to-person interaction that enables them to understand the material more easily. This learning style might have indirectly influenced the students' motivation and attitude towards the optimization of online learning. Ironically, not only few students were having issues with digital awareness, but few lecturers, according to the students, have not obtained internet or digital literacy required for online learning. It turned out that few lecturers and students were to be said having difficulty to access the learning platform. Thus, it was very possible that digital literacy for all participants really play pivotal role in order to carry out a successful online learning.

In addition, some lecturers were said to be only providing materials without giving any explanation, so the students might have needed to study the material on their own. They were probably reluctant or shy to ask to their lecturers regarding the material, and as a result their understanding was not most favourable. What made worse was that some assignments or tasks were given with little understanding, yet the due date was tight. Not to mention, some given assignments had submission time that was close to other courses, so the students might have not been able to work with the best time in doing the assignments.

In terms of learning platforms used in online learning, Figure 7 clearly shows that *Google Classroom* (57%) dominated the share, followed by *Zoom* (21.4%), and the rests were *WhatsApp/Line*, *Reguler LiVE Unpad*, or *Skype* with similarly lesser percentage. Since six until seven different platforms have been used in online learning, another challenge suddenly popped out. The number of platforms used was considered too many for some students. This occurred because each lecturer had his/her own preferred platform(s) in carrying out e-

learning, and, as it happens, students had to learn how to use and access each platform for the lectures.

Video conference applications like *Zoom* and *Google Meeting/Hangout* have their barriers for the students. During the learning process, students were expected to have big mobile packages in the first place, and later on it was more than often that lecturers who taught through these platforms did not share (unintentionally) the copy of material or presentation after class. In the researcher's experience, using *Zoom* is rather unstable because many times during attending live webinars from home the researcher seemed to experience poor internet issue despite his strong broadband connection. As a result, in some occasions, the researcher missed the information from the live video streaming due to the instability, and the students were more likely to experience the same technical problem as me. However, every cloud has a silver lining and *Speaking for Business Purposes* requires practice activity from the students, so *Zoom* was effectively used by the lecturers to conduct English conversation practice when it was inconvenient to be done in other platforms. Alternately, a few lecturers did the oral exercise through voice recording sent via *LiVE Unpad* once the materials had



been shared.

Figure 7. Learning platforms used in online learning

Other messenger platforms like *WhatsApp* and *Line* were also favoured by educators and students because of their simplicity and practicality. Prajana (2017) argues that *WhatsApp* can be used in e-

learning since it has one of the characteristics of web 2.0 technology: *collaborating* and *sharing*. Once shared, the material can be accessed and responded by the students almost in no time, and interaction between teacher and learner are also possible to take place at the same time. Exclusive Moodle LMS developed by *LiVE Unpad* also became one platform that was used in online learning. However, unlike *Google Classroom*, *LiVE* was not really favoured by many lecturers due to its complexity, and it is not simple to reduce the complexity of *LiVE* in short time. Moreover, many students and lecturers had difficult times in getting used to it. Despite its abundant features and versatility, *LiVE* may not be accessible for new learners, especially for those who are new to Moodle learning system.

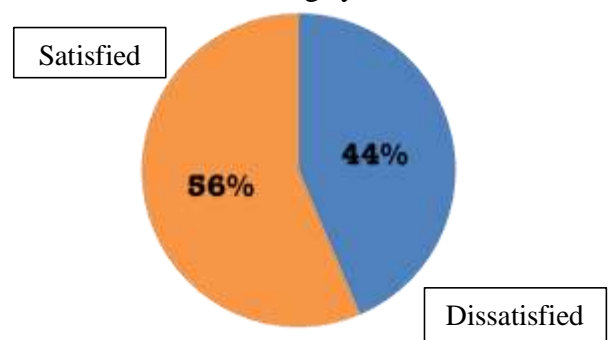


Figure 8. Students' satisfactory in online learning implementation

Ultimately, Figure 8 above illustrates students' satisfactory after the implementation of e-learning of the two courses: *English for Business Purposes* and *Speaking for Business Purposes*. It is no surprise that with so many barriers and challenges in the learning process, students felt the outcome of the e-learning implementation still needed to be improved. As many as 56% of the students were content, while 44% of them were disappointed. Since the 'lockdown' situation has resulted in a let-down for some students, it is necessary to developed online learning model by creating or composing teaching materials that are appropriate to the characteristics of e-learning, so that the implementation of online learning can be optimized. It is also evident that sufficient

time allocation as well as time management for the students are important keys since technical issues are really unpredictable and online courses require a great deal of time along with meticulous work. Should the policy of 'study from home' be extended, blended learning is then an alternate choice in which students are still able to make direct contact with their teachers or lecturers to consult the materials face-to-face.

As of June 2020 when this study done, New Normal scenario has been formulated in every sector of life including education. There is some suggestion for both educators and students to embrace the aftermath of the pandemic. When President Joko Widodo called on residents to adapt to 'new normal' by coexisting with COVID-19 (Adjie), adaptability is a must for everyone. Switching from conventional classroom to technology-based learning certainly has made the entire learning experience different than ever, so resistance to the change will be pointless. It does take time for learners and lecturers to get used to internet-based education, so online discussion as well as self-regulated learning should be promoted. Whereas online courses generally offer time flexibility, learning English as a foreign language requires strong commitment. Therefore, learners need to keep on self-motivating as well as equipping themselves with the latest information in order not to fall behind and to be able to tackle potential problems of online learning coming to them.

CONCLUSION

Even though more than a half of the students taking *English for Business Purposes* and *Speaking for Business Purposes* courses amid COVID-19 outbreak (56%) have good perception of e-learning, the pandemic has created the opposite effect for many others. This matter was indeed influenced by the knowledge and experience of students in using e-learning. The study also discovered that some students apparently favoured online learning for it suits their learning style well. E-learning is

actually good news, but at its early phase it constitutes particular menaces to students eventually causing dismay. Thus, attitude change and technological literacy would definitely support the students in attaining assurance to advance in their courses, including English language learning, with a positive outcome.

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