Research Article

The Stories of Three EFL College Students in East Java Universities amid the Covid-19: EFL Online Learning Process

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KEYWORDS

Covid-19;
EFL learner;
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Students' stories.

A B S T R A C T

The Covid-19 pandemic has also been felt by the world of education, especially in Indonesia. All parties involved in schooling are unprepared to handle this rapid outbreak. Distance learning in the network (online) is a new thing for both teachers and students themselves. Through the use of online applications, university lecturers in Indonesia continue to carry out their teaching duties by interacting online with students. The interactions are by uploading lecture material into the online application, giving assignments, online discussions, and reviewing the learning process. This research presents the results of an interview study with three English language education students from university in Indonesia about how their perceptions of their online learning experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research presented as an inquiry case study that looks at how participants position themselves in connection to the phenomena. The results of this research show that online learning carried out in an effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19 is good to do as an alternative during social distancing. The Covid-19 outbreak makes us have to limit social interaction to break the chain of transmission. In addition to the learning process and maintaining the interaction between lectures and students, online learning is a good idea because it gives students new knowledge and experience about technology, particularly online learning applications. Technology has been crucial in the teaching of English since it makes the creation and the use of electronic learning tools considerably simpler where students can get to know various online applications and how to use them. However, there are some issues that need to receive special attention, such as the instability of the internet network and economic factors. The result of this research will become as an input11 for lecturers and institutions in carrying out this online learning process so that it continues to run optimally.

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INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has also been felt by the world of education. Especially in Indonesia all parties involved in schooling are unprepared to handle this rapid outbreak. According to Giroux (2011), critical education in an uncertain world necessitates a vision that can look beyond the present and into the future in order to connect the fight

with the potential for future situations. Learning activities that were previously carried out with face-to-face method in the classroom switched to an online learning system. The concept of social distancing and physical distancing requires everyone to stay at home so that the spread of this virus does not spread. Thus, both lecturers and students are expected to stay at home and continue to carry out their duties and responsibilities. Online learning is a challenge for lecturers to conduct learning activities for online learning that give students the skills they will need in the future. Online learning differs from face-to-face learning in terms of its pedagogical impact (Setiono, 2021). Creative and innovative lecturers are required to continue teaching so students get information about appropriate education and teaching. Distance learning in the network (online) is a new thing for both teachers and students themselves (Rompas, 2021). Through the use of online applications, university lecturers in Indonesia continue to carry out their teaching duties by interacting online with students. The interactions are by uploading lecture material into the online application, giving assignments, online discussions, and reviewing the learning process. Holmes and Gardner (2006) revealed that online learning has the capacity to evaluate students or students as they learn while also enhancing their educational experience through appropriate social interaction, cultural diversity, and globalization while also dissolving spatial and temporal boundaries. The fact that online learning is learner-centered is for them both its most significant feature and its main benefit. The shift from in-person learning to online learning produces a variety of perceptions from varied approaches. This type of learning model has a number of benefits and drawbacks, and as a result, it affects how well the learning objectives are met. According to Kung and Chuo (2022), the students said that studying English using ESL/EFL websites was engaging and that the tutors' use of effective and essential teaching methods was crucial.

However, online learning cannot be separated from various problems as it is very substantial in the context of constraints in the learning process for all parties (teachers, students, and parents). A barrier to learning is the lack of understanding of how to use technology and high costs (Mastura, Santaria & Rustan, 2020). Meanwhile, Yeung and Yau (2021) revealed that socio-economic issues may have made it difficult for pupils to learn online because of their learning environment and lack of access to resources. To help individuals wanting to create online courses make informed choices during the implementation phase, Sun and Chen (2016) offered helpful tips. Based on their findings, the authors contend that for online training to be effective there must be three key components: first, well-designed course content; second, motivated interaction between instructors and

students; and third, swift technology advancements. It is intended that doing this, it will encourage continual debate of practical solutions that can improve universities' and faculty members' success in the shift to online instruction. Saefudin (2020) claimed that it is difficult to apply the online learning method in Indonesia. Numerous issues affect both teachers and pupils, such as teachers' technology proficiency restrictions because of the burdensome assignments and homework assigned by the teacher, as well as the fact that not all students have smartphones, independent student learning at home cannot be effectively implemented (mobile phone), unstable internet signals and pricey pulses limit online learning (data quotas).

Several researchers have conducted research on online learning in the pandemic. The first research was conducted by Fajar and Larasati (2022), the results of this study indicate that according to the four indicators of perceived usefulness, attitudes toward technology use, behavioral intentions, and perceived ease of use-online education has good potential to enhance the learning and teaching experience of students in English courses in junior high schools1 Perak. The second research was conducted by Purwati and Khairunisa (2022) who found that EFL students believe Zoom is ideal for supporting online learning because of its comprehensive and diverse Zoom meeting features. On the flip side, however, based on the students' comments, one of the drawbacks of Zoom meetings is that the tool has a tendency to consume internet limits. Third research was conducted by Shrestha et al. (2021) said that according to interviews with a sub-sample of 17 participants and teachers in applying online learning, teachers adapt the action potentials of the digital artifacts to local contexts and use them in the best ways to ease dialogue and improve student learning in challenging situations. Furthermore, Nasution (2021) revealed that the process of learning speaking skills is carried out through online learning using Zoom and Google Classroom applications. Moreover, the last one was done by Yen and Nhi (2021), in this study it was found that online instruction with Microsoft Teams is a short-term but effective alternative for us to work together to meet government anti-epidemic campaign requirements without disrupting the scheduled teaching process. Students were initially given the MS team for foreign language education in the previous semester with positive comments. Next, Padli and Rusdi (2020) revealed that students' learning independence towards online learning during the Covid-19 epidemic was highly positive, with a percentage of 77.50%, and the total response of students to online learning was very positive with a percentage of 77.71%. The study's findings show that online courses during the Covid-19 pandemic had a highly favorable impact.

From the several researchers above, the researchers found deficiencies in research conducted by previous researchers that all of them focus on one media and online learning method only to research, so that they do not represent the whole in online learning process, and the perception of students obtained is too narrow because it only focuses on one online learning platform. In the field, the teachers do not only apply one media or online learning model but more than one and various online platforms. Then the above research is carried out on junior high school students and senior high school students. Therefore, in this research, the researchers will focus on the perceptions of English students at universities in East Java and also not limiting only one model or online learning media, but all online learning platforms according to the facts in the field experienced by English students at universities in East Java. It is crucial to understand and to pay attention to students' experiences, thought processes, and feelings when engaging in online learning so that we may determine what challenges students face and how to address them. An event or all of the experiences a person has experienced are referred to as their experience. An essential component of the experience is a detailed account of his past experiences and actions so that students' perceptions will become as an input for lectures and institutions in carrying out this online learning process so that it continues to run optimally. In this research, the researchers will explore how online learning is implemented, how students feel in undergoing this online learning, and will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this online learning.

METHOD

The choice of participants who took part in this present research was influenced by several ethical considerations. The researchers first contacted and gave them an explanation of the research objectives. They were aware that their participation in the research was completely voluntary and that they might discontinue it at any time without suffering any consequences. They understood that their identity was pseudonymous and that the information that had been evaluated and provided would not endanger them in the future (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Research Design

This research used as an inquiry case study that investigated how participants positioned themselves in relation to the phenomenon of applying online learning in order to disclose the challenges and the advantages of doing so, as well as how to apply online learning effectively. A case study is an investigative design in which the researcher develops a detailed analysis of a case and examines a phenomenon in a real-life setting (Creswell, 2003). In this case, the researchers explored the feelings or perceptions of three students who had actually undergone online learning.

This research was also featured a qualitative methodology because according to Creswell (2012), a qualitative study relies on descriptive data rather than statistical methods frequently. A qualitative researcher should use a variety of sources of data rather than relying solely on one. It means that qualitative researchers frequently collect various types of data rather than relying on a single data source, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual material. The data were next examined by the researchers, who then classify it into groups or topics that span all of the data sources. According to the definition given above, descriptive qualitative research is a research approach that concentrates the analysis on providing a narrative description of the study object while avoiding the use of numerical data or statistics in the analysis of the data. After that, the researcher gathers data using a variety of sources, the research's natural environment, the researcher as a crucial tool, and participant meaning.

Participants

The participants in this research were three English students who were still actively studying at universities in East Java. They were chosen to be participants because they were currently registered as active students at universities in East Java as evidenced by the student card and KRS they have, and the three students had also undergone online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. To maintain their identity, each participant in this present research used a pseudonym. To ensure that data was accurate and comprehensive, the researchers only selected individuals they know. It is very important to communicate with each participant to collect data (Clandinin & Vera, 2008). Below is the brief information of participants in this present research.

Table 1. The Participants of the Research

Name	Age	Major		Semester	Universities	Description
Richard	20th	English Education	Language	Sixth Semester	Student at a university in Malang	conducted online learning during the pandemic
Aci	18t[h]	English Education	Language	Fourth Semester	Student at a university in Bangkalan	conducted online learning during the pandemic

Abiyyu	20th	English Language Education	Fourth Semester	Student at a university in Bangkalan	conducted online learning during the pandemic

Instrument

In this research, semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. Using a semi-structured technique, structured questions are created before being followed by unstructured or open-ended ones for clarification. According to Adams (2015), open-ended questions can be used to elicit more information during semi-structured interviews in a variety of scenarios. Semi-structured interviews are being used at this point because the unstructured questions enable to elicit an explanation and elaboration of the replies to the structured questions. In this approach, objectivity and depth can both be attained, and the outcomes can be tallied and explained.

The researchers conducted multiple one-on-one interviews as part of this qualitative study. One-on-one interviews are perfect for gathering information from subjects who are comfortable sharing their ideas and did not hesitate to speak out (Creswell, 2012). Participants were given the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences during this interview format. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the lndonesian and Maduranese languages of the participants. The interviews were conducted in stages. The first interview was carried out in May 2022, and the second interview was conducted in June 2022 since the researchers still needed more information.

The interview questions were divided into two parts. The first part dealt with participants' basic information about how deep their understanding about how online learning is and how online learning is implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic. Then it was continued with the second interview, where each participant was given development questions regarding to the constraints and the benefits of online learning and their expectations in online learning to get more detailed and accurate data such as:

1. How online learning is implemented?
2. How do students feel in undergoing this online learning?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this online learning?

The interview questions above can be developed according to the needs in the field to obtain accurate and comprehensive data.

Data Analysis

The data from the interviews were examined using a qualitative framework for data analysis method because the research is qualitatively grounded. In order to comprehend the overall significance of the participants' stories, first, the researchers read the interview transcript for numerous times. To concentrate on the key concerns connected to the research question, a few important themes are then emphasized. The themes that surfaced as a result of the phase were then classified as research findings. Next, the researchers convey their findings and are described as narratives depending on the research challenge. After reporting and presenting these findings, the researchers analyzed the findings and determined the research meaning. This interpretation involved presenting personal opinions, contrasting the data with the literature, and outlining potential problems and areas for further research. In order to determine accuracy, the researchers lastly conducted validation. After the transcription had been revised, the researchers gave the revised copy to the students to see if it accurately captured their response or position. They were encouraged to offer more details, alternate arguments, or responses. The final interview transcript was then revised for more research.

Trustworthiness Member-Checking

Trustworthiness issues are essential to both quantitative and qualitative research. To evaluate the value of the analysis is to make certain the results are persuasive, precise and reliable. Qualitative researchers frequently use the term "unbiased in research", they will assert that all research is interpretive and that the researcher must consider his or her position in the research, making the veracity or credibility of qualitative research findings extremely crucial (Creswell, 2007).

To ensure the validity of the findings in this research, a number of procedures have been employed. The researchers employed member checking. After sharing the research findings with the participant, the researchers asked for input on whether or not the conclusions were accurate and pertinent to the participants' data. The researchers conclude the data analysis if the participants state that the data findings are consistent with the information given at which point it can be argued that the research conclusions are accurate. This means that data from the various sources generated identical results that indicated the research validity (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Online Learning Practice in the Midst of a Covid-19 Pandemic

Around March 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. Hence, the learning procedure was done online using online applications at the time. Online instruction is used at all Indonesian universities.

> Richard*: I have been studying online for over a year at this point as I was still 4th semester when the Covid-19 pandemic hit and now I am the 7th semester.*

> Aci: *I'm in my third semester right now. Everything I do, from Osimaba to learning, is done online because I've been doing it since I started college.*

> Abiyyu: *At the beginning of Covid I was still doing face-to-face learning but after some time the corona virus spread so that my university implemented online learning around the middle of the semester.*

Online learning is carried out to avoid and prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. In the learning process itself, lecturers have their own methods and ways of delivering lecture material so that the material can be delivered properly. Lecturers also use various online applications in the learning process. As stated by the following participants.

> Richard said that "*In the learning process prefer to using Google Meet, the lecturer sends material through the Google Meet application then students are asked to read and understand the material, but sometimes the lecturer explains the material first before giving assignments*".

> According to Aci "*Each lecturer uses a different set of programs when teaching online. The WhatsApp program is mostly used for speaking classes, but occasionally the lecturer may provide themes to groups of students, asking them to record videos about the topics and upload them to YouTube. Sometimes lectures use Google Classroom and the MLS program for further learning*".

Abiyyu said that *"Online learning is done with a lot of online applications, almost every lecturer uses a different application, in speaking learning we use the zoom application, usually students are asked to make a power point and present it via zoom and discuss it via zoom too, but in other lessons there are those who use the Edmodo application. Then all students discuss and submit their assignments through Edmodo".*

EFL Learners' Perceptions of Online Learning in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic

The application of an online learning system in the midst of a pandemic has caused various reactions and perceptions of students. Students welcomed this online learning, they said that:

> According to Richard: *Online learning must continue to be carried out so that the learning process continues even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. With online learning I have learned a lot about technology, especially learning applications. The diversity of applications that lecturers use for learning media makes me have to learn how to use them well and this is a new insight for me.*

> Aci said *"I enjoy online learning because it allows me to connect with people, have discussions, and even meet in person while a pandemic is happening. Online learning was a huge benefit to me at the time as a new student because it allowed us to get to know one another. And I think online learning is excellent; I particularly learn a lot in the field of information technology. It has a ton of useful features that I've only recently discovered and discovered, and it's very enjoyable".*

> While according to Abiyyu: *"I think this online learning is very good and needs to be done so that interaction between lecturers and students or interaction between students continues. The Covid-19 pandemic is not an obstacle to continuing to learn, but with Covid-19 we can actually learn new and interesting things, especially*

in terms of technology, which we may not even encounter if we do face-to-face learning".

According to the results of the aforementioned interviews, it is evident that students are in favor of using the online learning system as a tool to supplement traditional classroom instruction. They actually quite enjoy attending online classes, which prepares students for working online. They will learn new words and gain knowledge of information and technology. They will therefore have no trouble employing the key applications in the field of education and teaching when they graduate later. Additionally, participants discussed how lecturers would assign tasks that might be either individual or group assignments. According to the findings of the interviews, participants preferred individual assignments for the following reasons:

Richard revealed that: *"When it comes to assignments, I prefer the lectures give me individual assignments rather than group ones since I feel free to express my thoughts and am happier with the outcomes of my own responses".*

According to Aci: *"I prefer individual assignments in my opinion if the lecturer gives individual assignments I can complete the task faster than group assignments because if the lecturer gives group assignments, I still have to wait for the response of my group members to do it, we have to make an appointment first when and where we do it the task is a kind of agreement and it takes a long time to decide on it because each group member has different activities and that takes me a long time to complete the task".*

Abiyyu stated that: *"I prefer individual assignments because when the lecturer gives group assignments, it is very difficult for me to invite my group to discuss, they seem to hand over the task to me to do, they give various reasons for avoiding the task, group assignments feel like individual assignments. so I prefer individual tasks, with individual tasks I am not tied to other people, I can make my own decisions without*

waiting for other people's opinions and also I can explore myself well".

Then, issues with this online learning start to appear. The availability of an internet connection and the varying financial capacities of the pupils are the problems. Some people can afford internet data packages, while others cannot. The participants protested, as they said, that:

Richard: *"I do encounter some challenges when learning online, specifically. For me, a villager, the inconsistent network is enough to obstruct my ability to learn online. Perhaps it's different for students who reside in urban areas because they frequently have a reliable signal. Because I didn't have a strong signal at the time and couldn't take online classes, I frequently entered and exited the Zoom application when online learning was being done at that time because the lack of a network prevents me from opening the Zoom application".*

Aci: *"I may not have network issues because I reside in a city, but I have more issues with my cellphone because it doesn't support online learning. Due to the lack of online learning support capabilities and the limited memory on my cellphone, I am unable to store some online apps. In other cases, the lecturer may even send me files that I am unable to open and access. Finally, I begged my parents to get me a new cellphone so that I could continue my online education".*

Abiyyu: *"The largest challenge, in my opinion, is the internet's data. My internet data is consumed significantly more than usual throughout the online learning process, which causes my internet data to deplete more quickly. I also have to download software with a fair amount of storage space. Even if at the time I was receiving internet quota aid from the government and it helped me a bit, I frequently buy internet data in order for online*

*learning to continue, and that costs
me more than face-to-face learning".*

The data set for this research includes the experiences of three college students who were enrolled in online courses during the Covid-19 epidemic. Based on the hints provided by the research objectives, the grouped findings are also analyzed and will be represented in the earlier empirical findings.

The Application of Online Learning

The Covid-19 pandemic has also been felt by the world of education especially the education system in Indonesia, the government has issued a policy to prevent transmission of this disease by implementing social distancing, so everyone must stay at home. This forced the teaching and learning process system which was originally carried out face-to-face to switch to an online learning system. Saeed Al-Maroof et al. (2021) also stated that through the use of online learning, a flexible and shareable educational format can be offered as a substitute for conventional face-to-face teaching scenarios. This is what happened to three students in East Java. At the beginning of Covid-19, learning was still carried out face-to-face for several months, but because Covid-19 began to spread, their campus implemented online learning. The use of computers and the internet, two-way communication between teachers and students, and the use of technology to accelerate the learning process are all aspects of online learning (Felix, 2003). The participants said that their lecturers implemented various learning platforms, including Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, YouTube, Google Classroom, Powerpoint, and MLS which were used to provide material from lectures to students. Participants mentioned that the lectures used WhatsApp and Zoom for the speaking class. However, in this research, it was found that using the Zoom application was burdensome for students because the Zoom application has a large capacity so that mobile use students must have adequate RAM then students also say that if learning is done via zoom the internet signal must be stable because if it is unstable students cannot attend lectures because zoom cannot be accessed, finally using Zoom can use up a fairly large data package. On the other hand, some lecturers use the MLS application, Google Meet, Google Classroom to convey material and information. Students can access material or themes related to learning that have been prepared by lecturers in this application anytime and from anywhere.

In addition, in terms of assignments, participants have the same opinion, they like it when the lecturer gives assignments individually rather than in groups, because if they get individual assignments, they can explore their opinions and ideas freely, whereas if they get group assignments, they have difficulty finding agreement with other group members regarding task completion.

EFL Learners' Perceptions on Online Learning

Students' perceptions have shifted as a result of the shift from face-to-face learning to online learning that uses various methodologies. Remote learning in the network (online) is something new for both the teacher and the students themselves (Rompas, 2021) in line with what the participants expressed in this research. They reveal that online learning is new to them, so they still have to learn how to properly and optimally use online learning platforms. According to Kung and Chuo (2022), who noted that students find learning English using websites very exciting, this form of learning approach has its pros and cons. The findings from Kung and Chou are the same as the findings in this research, they agree with online learning because they gain new skills in addition to knowledge of course material and technology, these findings support what has been found by previous researchers. According to Fajar and Larasati (2022), online learning has good potential to enhance the learning and teaching experience of students. Students can gain new experiences and knowledge that they have never had before.

However, contra statements were also conveyed by the participants in this research. They also said that online learning makes it a bit lazy because the lecturer's supervision is not intended when learning results in many students participating in online learning while sleeping and while eating snacks. This can have a negative impact on character development and students' behavior. In addition, online learning cannot be accessed anywhere and anytime and not all students can access it, especially students who do not have cellphones that have sophisticated features. In the findings of this research, not all students can access teaching materials distributed by lecturers wherever the fact is those in rural areas cannot access online learning properly due to housing constraints and the difficulty of internet signals in those places, it is different from students living in urban areas who get good access to online learning because of supporting public facilities. This finding contradicts the results of previous research examined by Gorska (2016) who stated that information shared by lecturers in online learning programs can be accessed anytime and from anywhere, and can be read repeatedly regardless of geographical location. In addition, students also complain on the inability of students to buy a smartphone that can support online learning and has a large storage capacity so that online application that needs a large capacity is one of the additional challenges faced by students. Furthermore, students also complain about internet quota problems.

They cannot buy internet packages that run out quickly which are used when learning online because of their limited economic capabilities of their learning and lack of resources.

Based on the above review which describes the findings in this research, it further reinforces the findings of previous research that implementing online learning methods in Indonesia is difficult. There are many problems that affect teachers and students, such as: restrictions on the teacher's technological capabilities, due to burdensome assignments and homework given by teachers, as well as the fact that not all students have smartphones so independent student's learning at home cannot be carried out or implemented effectively, unstable internet signal and expensive pulses (data quota) limit for doing online learning (Saefudin 2020).

CONCLUSION

Online learning carried out in an effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19 is good to do. In addition to the learning process and maintaining the interaction between lecturers and students, online learning is a good idea because it gives students new knowledge and experience about technology, particularly of online learning applications. Technologies have been crucial in the teaching of English since it makes the creation and its use of electronic learning tools considerably simpler, students can get to identify various online applications and how to use them. However, there are some issues that need to receive special attention, such as the instability of the internet network and economic factors. The researchers hope that the right method or solution will be found in the future so that online learning can run optimally and the obstacles found in this research can be overcome.

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