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UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT'S PERCEPTION OF ONLINE LEARNING IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASS

Cut Fatin Nabilla[1*]
Endang Komariah[2]
Nur 'Ain Binti Mohd Jani[3]

[1]*Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia*
[2]*Universitas Lampung, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia*
[3]*Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

ABSTRACT

Student perception offers numerous information about students' experiences in online courses, provides lecturers with valuable feedback, indicates how much students learn, and shows the quality of the teaching and learning process. The current study is aimed to find out the students' perception of speaking class conducted online in terms of usefulness, effectiveness, and intentions. The questionnaires employed in this quantitative study were the students' perceptions of the online speaking course, which were completed by 112 undergraduate EFL students. The descriptive statistics consisted of five number summary were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that the students had different perceptions about online learning for a speaking class. The students' perceptions of the online speaking class are mostly positive in the terms of usefulness and effectiveness. However, most of the students did not have positive intention to enroll in online speaking class in the future. Therefore, lecturers are suggested to use interactive methods in delivering the learning material with the use of video conferences such as Zoom and Google Meet.

Keywords: *English speaking class, perception of online learning, undergraduate*

[*] Corresponding author, email: nabillaafatin@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Academic processes in higher education have been altered by the rapid invention and proliferation of information and communication technology. Higher education institutions, particularly those at the university level, are more engaged in online teaching and learning in the twenty-first century because they are aware that internet technology can be used to support learning activities and improve students' experience and knowledge (Li et al., 2014; Tanyeli, 2009). Internet has a significant potential to improve students' language learning outcomes (Sung & Yeh, 2012).

Researchers have contrasted the advantages of language classes with extra traditional and online homework. Online homework actually improves student performance more than traditional homework, encourages greater student involvement, and motivates students to complete the tasks (Magalhães et al., 2020). In addition to achievement, one of the factors that serve as data sources for improving learning progress is student perception (Lestari et al., 2020). Therefore, when creating and constructing online course materials, lecturers must take into account the perceptions, requirements, and expectations of the students (Sahin & Shelley, 2008).

Many learning platforms, including Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Edmodo, and messaging services like WhatsApp groups and Telegram, have adopted online speaking classes (Purba, 2021; Wiranegara & Hairi, 2020). Students can now participate in peer collaborative learning by synchronously working in small groups in breakout rooms or in separate sessions using video meetings like Zoom and Google Meet (Saltz & Heckman, 2020). The breakout room was created to help a small group of students work on a problem outside of the main class meeting (Lougheed et al., 2012). Previous research has demonstrated that the online learning environment reduces learners' feelings of uneasiness by allowing them to participate and work behind the scenes (Sze, 2006). Because they did not have to "talk" in the online environment, learners believed that online learning would be simpler for individuals who lacked confidence in their speaking abilities (Ku & Lohr, 2000). They gain advantages from lowering the danger of in-person interactions. In addition, less lecturer supervision and more authentic assignments make it possible for students to express themselves more freely when communicating online (Rodrigues, 2015).

The vast majority of students are still hesitant to study speaking abilities online. According to Mardiah (2020), interactive discussions between lecturers and students on online learning platforms are not as effective as face-to-face instruction because of a variety of reasons, including the students' level of English language proficiency, internet access, and technological readiness. It is therefore predicted that students will have varying opinions on speaking classes offered online. However, research on student perception in an online learning, specifically in a speaking class, rarely involved adequate number of participants. Therefore, the results of the previous study could not offer conclusive results. In order to close this research gap, this study examined the students' perceptions of an online speaking class based on more than 100 participants who had experienced an online speaking class during the Covid-19 outbreak. The results of this study are beneficial for educators in determining whether speaking class can be conducted online.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Learning

After centuries, online learning has started to develop since the late 20th century, along with the rapid development of the internet and technology. The first distance learning course was started in 1840 by Sir Isaac Pitman, who used the mail-learning method and shorthand technique to teach students (Bezhovski & Poorani, 2011). Educational institutions are quickly embracing online learning as a viable option to both distant learning and regular classroom instruction (Hiltz & Turoff, 2005). Because online learning is flexible, more colleges and universities are now offering it, and more students are taking advantage of it (Stone, 2019).

The adoption of online learning has brought about a number of benefits for education. With the flexibility of online learning, lecturers can offer course content utilizing voice and video recordings and other high-quality teaching methods for less money (Yulia et al., 2019). Since students can choose their own location and time for learning to preserve a study-life balance, online learning enables flexible learning hours (Malik & Rana, 2020). By being aware of their responsibilities and actively participating in the learning activities, students participating in online learning are encouraged to become self-learners.

Additionally, it is affordable because there is no need to travel for studying because courses are offered online and can be taken anywhere with access to an internet network (Mukhtar et al., 2020). According to Malik and Rana (2020), lecturer-student engagement is higher in online learning than it is in traditional classroom settings. Additionally, online learning platforms provide students more control over the content and allow it to be tailored to their requirements. The use of ICT by lecturers to produce tests or quizzes and swiftly mark them is encouraged by online learning as well (Todd, 2020).

Online education, however, also has significant drawbacks. According to Ivone et al. (2020), students encountered problems with the environment and infrastructure when using the internet, such as poor internet access in rural or isolated places and the lack of a conducive learning environment at home. According to earlier research, students lost focus during lectures, lacked discipline, responded unruly, and copied work from the internet (Mukhtar et al., 2020). Lack of physical interaction with friends is also affecting the pupils' motivation. The lecturers felt that online classes were ineffective for teaching speaking courses because they had little control over the class or the students' circumstances, had to modify and rebuild their teaching methods, and had to spend a lot of time reviewing students' work (Todd, 2020). Additionally, Muthuprasad et al. (2021) found that some students experienced problems with their devices and a lack of learning tools or resources, such as a lack of mobile devices or laptops for online lectures.

EFL students' perception of online learning

The learning environment, which gives details about the student experience, has an impact on how students perceive the learning process (Ferreira & Santoso, 2008). Since it influences the specific approach to learning that a student adopts and describes pupils in a certain learning scenario, the students' perception is essential (Hassall & Joyce, 2001). The perception of students provides a wealth of information about their experiences in online courses, offers lecturers insightful feedback, demonstrates how much students learn, and demonstrates the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Jurczyk et al., 2004; Rahma & Setiyana, 2019). Tudor et al. (2010) also make the point that universities can benefit from students' perceptions of their learning environments and experiences in order to

promote their academic progress and make necessary adjustments to encourage students to enroll in the courses they are offering.

Aldossary (2021) measured students' perceptions of online learning using three criteria: behavioral intention, efficiency, and usefulness. While perceived ease of use or efficiency refers to students' perceptions of how readily they can utilize the learning platform, perceived utility refers to students' perceptions that the learning system will help them enhance their performance and productivity (Lazim et al., 2021). The willingness of students to prefer online learning over face-to-face learning is sometimes referred to as behavioral intention (Tag et al., 2017). Nassoura (2020), in contrast, employed four criteria to assess how students felt about online learning: the qualities of the instructor (IC), the students' social presence (SP), the instructional design (ID), and trust (TR). First, the qualities of an instructor affect their ability to communicate and their responsibilities as a teacher. The second factor is social presence, which is connected to the interactions and engagement of students during the learning process (Wei et al., 2012). Third, instruction must be logically planned and tailored to the needs of the students (Kirschner, 2002). Last but not least, student confidence in online learning is essential, and students who find the courses useful will enjoy their study time (Sahin & Shelley, 2008).

Students' attitudes have changed as a result of the integration of online learning into the teaching and learning process. According to Asiry's research from 2017, when offered with engaging teaching strategies, students see online learning favorably and prefer it over in-person classroom activities. Online education also increased students' digital literacy and had a positive effect on their ability to learn. It also encouraged students to become autonomous learners (Cranfield et al., 2021). Additionally, John (2020) noted that students thought online learning was beneficial and efficient because it gave them more opportunity to be in charge of their education. Another study found that students viewed online learning favorably in terms of accessibility and flexibility because it enhances classroom learning and provides unrestricted online access to all course materials (Suharsih & Wijayanti, 2021).

Contrarily, Susila et al. (2020) believe that because of a lack of resources, such as internet access, and a general lack of student comprehension, online learning was unsatisfactory for students. Students preferred face-to-face training over online instruction, according to Bali and Liu's (2018) research, because online learning

restricts student interactions and lowers their motivation to study. Some students who took online courses were uninterested in the teaching techniques employed by their lecturers as a result of which they gave their professors lower ratings on the evaluation form, and they concurred that online learning needed to be improved (Asiry, 2017; Lowenthal et al., 2015). In a similar vein, Nugroho et al. (2020) demonstrated that despite the lecturers' use of a variety of engaging teaching and learning techniques, many students still had negative perceptions of online lectures due to the lack of contact throughout the learning activity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative research with a survey design using a questionnaire. This study falls under the genre of observational study. Students who have taken speaking classes at the English Education Department of Universitas Syiah Kuala online are the population of this study. Because the author employed the whole sample method, every member of the population was chosen to participate in the study. Thus, the 239 students from batches 2020 and 2021 of the English Education Department who participated in online speaking classes were deemed the sample for this study. From 239 target participants, 112 of them completed the questionnaire, and thus these participants were the actual sample of this study.

As research tools for this study, a questionnaire was used. The statements in the questionnaire were all closed-ended, and the replies to the items were graded on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). Three separate components made up the questionnaire. Students' desire to engage, gender, age, and semester were all included in the section A's participant personal data. The instrument for measuring student perception was adapted from Aldossary (2021) and translated into Indonesian in Section B. It was composed of 15 measures that examined students' perceptions of online learning and covered topics like usefulness, efficiency, and behavioral intentions. Based on Cronbach's alpha, the scale reported by Aldossary had a dependability rating of 0.82.

Participants received the surveys in-person in the classroom for 30 minutes. The researcher described the study's objectives and

methodology. The participants' names would remain private to protect their privacy and anonymity. The only information they had to enter was their gender, course of study, semester, and GPA. The participants will then receive instructions from the writer on how to complete the questionnaire; however, clear instructions were also attached to serve as a guide for them. The participants were also asked to complete the questionnaire by selecting one of the levels of agreement for each of the statements that were included on it.

After transforming nominal data into ordinal data, the collected data were examined. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to validate the questionnaire to ensure that each item was usable. The correlation coefficient between the variable and the factor is then calculated using the factor loading. Every item's factor loading needs to be 0.30 or greater in order to be regarded a decent item; otherwise, the item should be eliminated. After finishing factor analysis and eliminating some items, the author computed descriptive statistics consisting of the five-number summary, namely the minimum data value, the first quartile, median, third quartile, and maximum data value, to describe how the data set looks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

In order to determine the factors influencing each item on the questionnaire about student perspective, the authors utilized confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Table1 displays the CFA findings for each question on students' perception.

Table 1. Results of CFA for the questionnaire

Item	Usefulness	Efficiency	Intention
Q01	0.54		
Q02	0.31		
Q03	0.36		
Q04	0.73		
Q05	0.81		
Q06	0.20		
Q07	0.25		
Q08	0.50		
Q12	0.37		

Q09		0.54	
Q10		0.61	
Q11		0.36	
Q13		0.24	
Q14			0.90
Q15			0.82

According to Table 1, three items—items 06, 07, and 13—were eliminated from the study because the factor loading was less than 0.30. As a result, the study only comprised 12 items.

Furthermore, the data from the questionnaire with the remaining items were calculated using a descriptive statistical analysis. The five-number summary that describes how the data set appears in the table below is an example of descriptive statistics.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of students' perception

Perception	Min	Q1	Med	Q3	Max	Mean	SD
Usefulness	1.71	2.86	3.29	3.57	4.43	3.27	0.53
Efficiency	2.00	3.00	3.33	3.67	5.00	3.35	0.61
Intention	1.00	2.00	3.00	3.12	5.00	2.81	0.91

According to Table 2, most students' opinions on online learning in speaking class were neutral. Based on both means and medians, students see online learning as having more efficiency than the other two parts of perception. The following table presents the percentage of positive, negative, and neutral perception on the use of online learning in a speaking class.

Table 3. Frequency of perception levels

Perception	Usefulness		Effectiveness		Intentions	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Very positive	48	6%	34	10%	10	5%
Positive	290	37%	119	36%	38	17%
Neutral	297	38%	125	37%	97	43%
Negative	122	16%	47	14%	57	25%
Very negative	27	3%	11	3%	22	10%

Table 3 shows that the percentages of positive perception on the use of online learning were more frequent for usefulness and

effectiveness. However, many students were not positive in their intention to keep taking online speaking classes, and most of them were neutral in this category of perception.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to find out the undergraduate students' perception of online speaking class. The results of the study showed that the students perceived online learning in speaking class positively in terms of its usefulness and effectiveness. However, most of students were neutral about their intention to have online speaking class in the future.

The results of this study have provided significant information regarding the usefulness and effectiveness of online speaking classes. Although the results of the study show that mostly students were positive, the percentages of positive response were very low. Therefore, the general results of this study need to be interpreted with caution. First, only less than a half of the total responses were positive, i.e. 43% for usefulness and 46% for effectiveness. Meanwhile, almost 20% of the responses were negative for both usefulness and effectiveness. This result suggests that students were not confident that speaking class conducted online was useful in improving their speaking skills. This is expected because many online classes, including speaking classes, were not well-prepared. It has been suggested that speaking class requires maximum interaction between students and lecturers and among students themselves. This type of interaction is possible if lecturers teach synchronously using relevant tools such as Zoom and Google Meet. However, recent study found that WhatsApp was still one of the preferred tools used in online learning in the same province as the present study (Amin & Sundari, 2020). Thus, it is possible that some of the participants did not experience adequate interaction in their speaking classes. This conclusion is emphasized by their intention to keep learning speaking through an online class. The percentage of students who were negative for this perception was 35%, while only 22% were positive. These figures confirmed that students preferred a speaking class taught through an in-person instruction.

Another interesting result is that many students were neutral in the use of online speaking class. This result is expected because online class is the only possible mode of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, students might also understand that better speaking classes required that the classes be conducted through

synchronous mode using Zoom or Google Meet. Both platforms need a stable internet connection and extra data size. Meanwhile, there have been many complains on internet connection during the online learning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research was intended to find out the students' perception of speaking class conducted online in terms of usefulness, effectiveness, and intentions. The results of the research show that students had mixed perception of online learning for a speaking class that they experienced during their study at an undergraduate degree. In general, students are positive for usefulness and effectiveness of online speaking class although the percentages of students who were neutral were almost the same as those who were positive. However, there were more students who disagreed that they would take an online speaking class in the future than those who agreed. Based on these results, students' perception of online learning was rather positive for usefulness and effectiveness, but they were negative for their intention to continue learning speaking online. Therefore, it can be suggested that the current practice of how online learning is conducted in a speaking class needs to be improved with the use of more video conference, which enables interaction.

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