Analysis of Students' Perspective in Using E-Learning Platforms

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred significant transformations within the education sector, leading many institutions to shift towards online learning platforms. This study aimed to examine students' perspectives on the usage of various platforms during the pandemic. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study combined quantitative and qualitative techniques, gathering data from 30 students enrolled in the Department of English Education at Universitas Syiah Kuala across the batches of 2018, 2019, and 2020. Structured questionnaires were utilized in the survey, focusing on four primary platforms: E-Learning USK, Zoom, Edmodo, and WhatsApp. Additionally, selected students underwent interviews to provide deeper insights. The study's findings revealed E-Learning USK as the most preferred platform, with a mean score of 95 and satisfaction expressed by 3.16% of students. Notably, E-Learning USK emerged as the most accessible and effective platform. Following closely were video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp, which also garnered significant favourability. These findings carry profound implications for educators, assisting them in selecting platforms tailored to their students' needs. Furthermore, the study underscores the paramount importance of utilizing suitable platforms for online learning during the COVID-19 crisis. It positions E-Learning USK as the primary choice for students, closely followed by video conferencing platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp. Armed with this insight, educators can make informed decisions in platform selection, ensuring students have access to an optimal learning experience.

Keywords: *distance learning, e-learning, English language teaching, platforms.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the WHO (World Health Organization) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic with a giant virus spread rate (Dias et al., 2020), almost all aspects of human life on Earth have been disrupted, and many countries, including Indonesia, have decided to close schools and universities (Viner et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact, especially on education (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020). Consequently, The Indonesian government has issued a policy that learning should be done from home, and this has forced teachers to educate their students through online-based distance learning (Yulia, 2020).

Since then, learning has taken place differently with different obstacles faced. The quality of teaching and learning, e-learning has become a pillar of success in higher education (Bhuasiri et al., 2012) for online learning. However, even though some scholars have identified the benefits of e-learning platforms in teaching, students can interact with teachers using Google Classroom, Edmodo, Zoom, or WhatsApp groups. Large countries and towns are constantly confronted with challenges while transitioning from traditional offline classroom training to abrupt online training.

Online-based learning has created a wide range of problems (Dube, 2020). Researchers have found several problems related to online learning, such as (1) lousy internet network connection causes students to be unable to join classes (Evans et al., 2020); (2) monotonous learning media used by lecturers has made students get bored (Daniel, 2020; Murphy, 2020); (3) some students have difficulty in understanding the material taught online (Dhawan, 2020); (4) some lecturers gave only assignments without explanations (Aristovnik at al., 2020); and (5) student independence, connection issues, and lack of familiarity with online materials (Allo, 2020).

Online learning is provided partially or entirely through the Internet, and studies have shown that millennial learners have fully embraced it at both the social and academic levels (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). These millennial students have lived with many technological advances in their social lives. Even students in other countries can accept online learning (Al-Adwan et al., 2018).

Several studies about e-learning implementation have been conducted, but these are mainly focused on the students' perceptions of using e-learning platforms. In response to the advancement of technology, Khan (2013) discussed the relevance of employing e-learning tools in teaching English. Besides that, Alqurashi (2011) conducted another study on the issues and solutions for e-learning implementation using modern technology in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), with three specialists as participants or study subjects.

It was identical to the findings of Raheem and Khan (2020), two Indian researchers who focused on the importance of e-learning in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Lee (2010), e-learning users face several new constraints, such as the impersonal nature of the online experience. On the other hand, the new generation spends more time in their daily lives on social networks for social purposes. Social media platforms enable various applications that exhibit characteristics associated with educational technologies already in use at the university level, such as communication, participation, interactivity, and collaboration.

Meanwhile, Riyanda et al. (2020) did another research. They explained that some activities that can be done during online learning include online communication and discussion. According to Chun et al. (2016), online learning is a learning process that

reaches the Internet network in the learning process. Online learning provides opportunities for students with flexibility no matter where students and teachers are. As a result, to know students' acceptance of e-learning, perceptions, satisfaction, and opinions about their own experiences, it is necessary to investigate the perspective of e-learning use.

The previous study applied pre-test and post-test to determine data that illustrates the difference between each platform (Nasution & Maisaroh, 2019). On the other hand, this study uses media questionnaires and interviews to assess each platform. The research questions are:

1. What kinds of e-learning platforms are preferred by students?
2. What is students' perspective on the use of e-learning towards their achievement?

By addressing these questions, this research aims to provide insights into the evolving landscape of online education amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 era.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Learning Platforms

Online learning platforms refer to digital platforms that enable individuals to access educational resources, courses, and instructional materials through the Internet. These platforms provide a virtual environment where learners can engage in various online activities, such as watching recorded lectures, participating in interactive discussions, completing assignments, and taking assessments. Furthermore, online learning platforms offer flexibility and convenience as they allow students to access educational content anytime and anywhere with an internet connection (Hamid, 2020).

Meanwhile, video conferencing allows synchronous face-to-face communication (Akmal et al., 2022). Teachers and students communicate in real-time interaction using various platforms such as Zoom, Edmodo, WhatsApp and Google Classroom; they need to have basic knowledge of the use of technological educational tools and software because these platforms are now popular to be used in online classrooms. Each platform has benefits and drawbacks in terms of satisfying teaching needs. Many teachers need more time to learn about online materials, such as video conferences, entertaining content, and creating time-saving search strategies using the Internet (Rana et al., 2018). As a result, some teachers prefer to use more than one platform collaboratively to meet the needs of their students (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). With the advancement in information technologies, e-learning has become an integral part of the modern higher education system.

2.2 Types of Learning Platforms

Rovai and Jordan's (2004) study indicated that students, particularly dependent learners, are less self-regulated and need frequent direction and reinforcement from a visible professor; otherwise, they are easily lost during the course. A new learning modality known as hybrid or blended learning has been introduced to deal with the lack of student-instructor face-to-face contact in distance learning. Dodero et al. (2003)

support the idea that hybrid learning encourages more student participation when compared with pure virtual e-learning.

Concurrently, traditional face-to-face courses increasingly use the Internet to support some course activities. The concept of hybrid learning or blended learning discussed in this paper refers to the mixed mode of instruction which formally combines face-to-face and distance learning by incorporating technology to facilitate the learning process. Hybrid learning, or blended learning, is a mixed mode of instruction, formally combining traditional face-to-face and pure online learning. These two terms (hybrid learning and blended learning) are used alternatively but refer to the same concept. However, Hinterberger et al. (2004) use these two terms separately. They define hybrid learning as the method of educating at a distance that uses technology combined with traditional education.

2.3 Students' Perspectives

Students' perceptions have a favorable impact on the quality of engagement and communication in teaching-learning activities. It is implied that having a positive attitude toward something or other people will benefit the individual. Perception can also be defined as a person's interpretation of things (Amir et al., 2020). The shape of information gained through the senses is referred to as perception. Humans see things with their senses and interpret them with their actions and thoughts. All of one's experiences are captured by the senses, saved in the mind, and manifested as an opinion on something.

2.4 Previous Studies

In a study by Mulyani et al. (2021), EFL teachers should be concerned about their students' successful learning outcomes when English language instruction shifts from offline to online. When lecturers prepare and schedule their lessons, they must keep the students in mind. During the COVID-19 epidemic, this study will examine students' perspectives and preferences on English instruction through e-learning. By involving 106 English class students from three different higher education institutions in Aceh, Indonesia, this study used a qualitative technique in a descriptive method design. To analyze the data, thematic and comparative analyses were used. According to the study's findings, 50% of students cite unfavorable aspects of the internet network, such as high demand for internet quotas, limitations in learning material explanation and absorption, and social media effects. The study also finds that positive characteristics account for 59.6 percent of the findings.

Apriani et al. (2022) conducted a study to determine the perceptions of English students from seven universities in Indonesia about using e-learning platforms in terms of gender during the COVID-19 pandemic. An online questionnaire was used to collect the information (i.e., Google Form). The participants in this study were 210 English majors from seven Islamic universities in Indonesia. They are: the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Curup, IAIN Bengkulu, Raden Fatah State Islamic University (UIN), IAIN Salatiga, UIN Mataram, Sulthan Thaha Saifudin State Islamic University (UIN), and IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The study included 30 male students and 30 female students from each university. Based on the findings, there are three key findings in this study. First, based on the types of ICT used, male and female students used Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp in language learning. These platforms are considered

easier to operate. The platform that both did not use to learn was *Skype.* Hence, female students prefer various types of ICT in learning English skills over male students.

Another research was conducted by Yulia et al. (2019) to determine whether practitioners perform assessments. Online quizzes are preferable to paper-and-pencil tests. There is, however, a scarcity of data demonstrating how online assessment contributes to students' overall English achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine how online exams affect student performance. The impact of interactive online examinations on students' English skills was investigated using a quasi-experimental design in this study. In this study, 86 undergraduate TESL students participated; 53 were assigned to the online group at random, while 33 were assigned to the control group. The researchers used tests to compare both groups' performance on five exams. According to the findings, the online assessment group scored higher on four examinations that measured listening and reading skills. The control group fared much better on the assessment that involved presenting (evaluated speaking skills). These data suggest that online examinations improve students' listening, reading, and writing skills, but not as much as previously thought.

Moreover, Mathew et al. (2019), in their research entitled "Challenges and Implications of Virtual E-Learning Platform in an EFL Context: Perceptions of Teachers," examine the pedagogical efficiency of e-learning systems. The research was carried out at Jouf University in Saudi Arabia. To increase the quality of education at all levels, the institution has begun to use the Blackboard Collaborate software, a different e-learning platform. The study used a questionnaire to gather the thoughts and opinions of 20 EFL (English Foreign Language) teachers. According to the findings, the use of e-learning platform can help learners relax and create a stress-free environment. In a technology-mediated classroom, teacher training programs targeted at reorienting teachers in the creative use of e-learning platforms could lead to a fruitful teaching-learning environment. According to the research, a mixed strategy – using both a virtual platform and face-to-face classroom teaching and learning - is the most effective.

Biswas et al. (2020) conducted a study to measure the students' perception of using mobile for learning during COVID-19 in Bangladesh, especially from the university students' perspective. This survey was conducted on 416 students from different universities students in Bangladesh to understand the students' perception of using mobile phones as a learning system. The findings of this study show that most students at the university level have a positive perception of mobile learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, mobile learning may help students fill the study gap. This study revealed that mobile learning is very helpful in recovering the study gap during this COVID-19 pandemic. The study findings will help educational institutions incorporate mobile learning technology for the whole system, where social media may enhance the process of teaching and learning.

In addition, the platform selection used during online classes positively impacts teaching and learning. Therefore, this study aims to analyze student perspectives on using e-learning platforms by English students at Universitas Syiah Kuala to determine what kinds of online platforms students prefer. This study also aims to determine student responses to using e-learning towards their achievement.

3.   RESEARCH METHODS

3.1   Approach

The study employed a descriptive statistical approach for quantitative data analysis, complemented by an in-depth interview approach to gather qualitative data. This combined methodology facilitated a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on the e-learning platform. By integrating quantitative data from questionnaires with qualitative insights gleaned from interviews, the research aimed to achieve its objectives more effectively (Poth & Searle, 2021). This methodological fusion draws upon the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, enhancing the depth and breadth of the study's findings (Creswell & Creswell Báez, 2020). Additionally, the utilization of a mixed-method approach and action research further enriched the research methodology, enabling a holistic exploration of the research topic and facilitating meaningful insights for educational practice.

3.2   Sample

Thirty students from the batches of 2018, 2019, and 2020 of the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, were purposefully selected as respondents. Purposive sampling, as delineated by Acharya et al. (2013), involves selecting participants based on specific criteria to align with research objectives. In this instance, the selection criteria were designed to ensure representation across different batches within the English Education Department.

To examine students' strategies for overcoming challenges encountered during online learning, the questionnaire comprised 24 items categorized into four sections, each corresponding to a specific platform under scrutiny. This questionnaire structure, adapted from Shaharanee et al. (2016), facilitated a systematic exploration of students' experiences and responses across various online learning platforms.

Table 1. Data respondent.

Respondent	JT	BY	H
Platform	Edmodo, E-Learning USK, Zoom	Edmodo, E-Learning USK, Zoom	Edmodo, E-Learning USK, Zoom
Highest Educational Qualification	Bachelor Degree	Bachelor Degree	Bachelor Degree
Year	2018	2019	2020

3.3   Instruments

The analysis of interview data followed the model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which provided a systematic framework for organizing and interpreting qualitative data. In addition to interviews, the researcher employed questionnaires as described in the research design section. Questionnaires, classified as self-report data collection instruments, were completed by each research participant to gather insights into their perceptions, personalities, and behavioral intentions (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). This dual approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences and

perspectives regarding the use of e-learning platforms, enriching the depth and breadth of the study's findings.

3.4   Data Collection

The researcher administered 24 questionnaires to 30 students using Google Forms as the distribution platform. The questionnaire was structured into four distinct parts, focusing on Zoom, Edmodo, WhatsApp, and E-Learning USK platform respectively. Additionally, mean scores were computed for each part to collect data, allowing for differentiation between the platforms. Each respondent was allotted 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire, ensuring adequate time for thoughtful responses while maintaining efficiency in data collection.

3.5   Data Analysis

The techniques encompassed three primary activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Following the classification of data from semi-structured interviews, recorded interviews were transcribed and subsequently categorized based on emergent themes. Additionally, interview extension and data triangulation were employed as validation procedures. In instances where the initial data were deemed insufficient, interview extensions were conducted to gather additional insights. Source triangulation was then utilized to corroborate data accuracy across multiple sources, ensuring the reliability and validity of findings (Sugiyono, 2018). These methodological approaches facilitated a thorough and rigorous analysis of the qualitative data, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's conclusions

4.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Results

Based on the observation data, the teacher informed that their priority class was to achieve the goal of their learning lessons. Since the pandemic and their experience were new to online learning platforms, therefore, the most important thing to do when using an online platform as an online lesson is to ensure that the students can easily use the new mode of online learning.
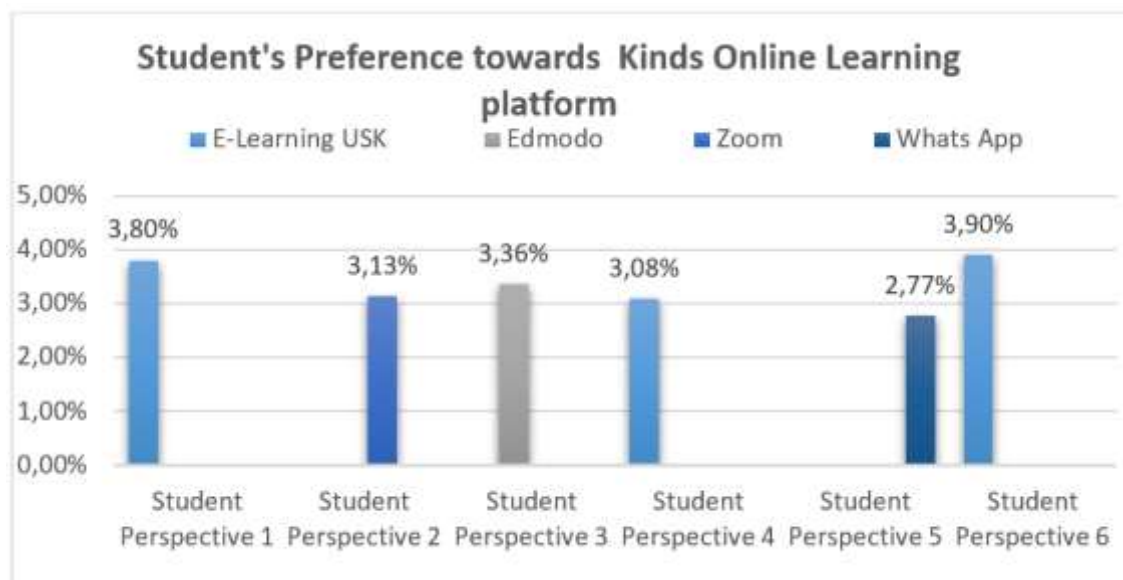
Table 1. Results of the study

The interview findings echo the sentiment expressed by one of the students from batch 2019 (BY), highlighting the flexibility of online learning but also underscoring its limitations in terms of classroom management and student engagement. This indicates that the effectiveness of online learning hinges not solely on the platform used but also on the instructional strategies employed by teachers to captivate students' interest, even amid the shift to blended learning.

> "In my opinion, learning may be flexible using various online platforms and but cannot meet proper classroom management, enhanced student attention." (BY, 2018)

Following BY's statement, it does not depend on what kind of online learning someone used but on the online lesson the teacher used to attract and increase students' interest in online learning, despite then having to shift to blended learning.

Student representative from batch 2018 (AL) acknowledge the advantages and drawbacks of e-learning platforms. While they appreciate the accessibility and flexibility offered by these platforms, challenges such as connectivity issues and difficulties in material delivery are noted. Despite these obstacles, students find e-learning to be generally effective, albeit accompanied by screen-related stress.

> "By using e-learning platforms, I felt there are advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that it is free anywhere, and learning can still be accessed easily. The drawback is the problem with the signal, and sometimes the material is not conveyed properly. Learning using the e-learning platform is quite easy and effective. As confirmed by one of the interviewees. It's just that sometimes the website can't be accessed smoothly, and I also feel stress due to the daily need to spend time on the screen." (AL, 2018)

Despite being out of school for academic tasks during COVID-19, the students still had to study diligently. The teachers and students must remain motivated and focused on education through constant reminders through the WhatsApp Group (WAG).

4.2   Discussion

From the results of the questionnaire, it is found that the students prefer E-Learning USK as the top learning platform they use during online classes. It is indicated that the student perspective use of E-Learning USK is more favorable for students. The results of this study were supported by previous studies, which found that the participants preferred to use e-learning as their study platform during the pandemic online classes. Regarding this, a study conducted by (Sari et al., 2020) found that students' perception of online learning using various media or applications in a course has a good category for implementation.

Online learning was helpful, even if not entirely (Sujarwo et al., 2020). Teachers would frequently remind and encourage their pupils about the value of education in order to increase their interest in studying, even when they were doing it online. This strategy is consistent with the viewpoints expressed by Ayua (2017), George (2020), and Yen (2020), who underlined the necessity of teachers reinforcing to students the value of learning outside of the classroom. Additionally, ensuring that students participate in cooperation and classwork is another strategy to increase their enthusiasm for learning (Wei & Chou, 2020).

In addition, students agree that they can post and evaluate free content in e-learning applications. Due to the flexibility and freedom provided by e-learning technology, students have a clear attitude and agreement toward user control of learning through e-learning. Other benefits include the opportunity to try something new, see how technology has changed, develop critical thinking skills, and face challenges in various fun activities, such as completing tasks and assignments assigned by the lecturer.

One student from batch 2018 (JT) expressed their satisfaction with E-Learning USK, citing features such as a grace period for assignment submission and easy accessibility to course materials.

> "E-Learning USK is more interesting and effective because there is a grace period in collecting assignments, and the display is easy to access. Sometimes, the lecturers also provide more lecture materials in e-learning than in other platform apps. E-learning has two impacts; each use of technology must have an impact, but if you look at the quantity of use during a pandemic, I think it is very helpful." (JT, 2018)

Researchers discovered that the most effective teaching and learning technique is a blended strategy involving virtual platforms and face-to-face classroom education and learning. Their results, this research finding (Sujarwo et al., 2020) showed that the students have well-accepted e-learning. They were inclined toward online learning tools that interact with each other and educators. However, there are negative factors such as lack of financial support and availability of internet access. As a result, necessary efforts should be taken to improve the quality of e-learning to aid students' learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

5.   CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study examines the perspective of learning processes utilizing e-learning platforms during the pandemic, particularly focusing on the experiences of students from

the Department of English at Universitas Syiah Kuala. The findings reveal that four primary types of platforms are predominantly utilized by students to navigate the challenges encountered during online learning.

According to the questionnaire results, the usage rate of E-Learning USK stands at 63.33%, indicating its prominence as the most frequently utilized platform among students. Following closely, Edmodo is utilized by 63.8% of respondents, while the Zoom platform is utilized by 60.00% of participants. Additionally, WhatsApp emerges as another prevalent platform, with a usage rate of 58.8%.

These findings underscore the diversity of platforms employed by students to facilitate their online learning experiences. While E-Learning USK enjoys a slightly higher usage rate compared to Edmodo and Zoom, WhatsApp also emerges as a popular choice among students. This diversity reflects the adaptability and flexibility of students in utilizing various platforms to navigate the challenges posed by online learning during the pandemic.

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