Exploring Students' Perception on Online EFL Learning through WhatsApp Application

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempted to find out students' perception in their learning English process through WhatsApp application. The study was conducted based on some facts that there are recently learning delivered by some teaching techniques because of Covid 19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic of Covid 19 has changed the system of education in the world, Indonesia is one of the countries that was influenced and applied distance learning system. The study was conducted in one of the private universities in Tangerang Selatan. There were 20 participants involving in this study who came from the second semester of academic year 2021-2022. To find some accurate data, the researchers collected a data through semi-structure interviews via Google Meet. The students were asked to join some learning activity such as speaking, writing, listening and reading. Then, they were interviewed about what they feel and their experiences during online learning. A qualitative study which focuses on a design narrative was used to get students' point of view regarding learning English through WhatsApp application. The result showed that the students have a good perception of learning English using WhatsApp. The use of WhatsApp in learning English is very influential on students.

Key words: *Online learning, Students' perception, WhatsApp*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi siswa tentang proses pembelajaran Bahasa inggris melalui aplikasi WhatsApp. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan berdasarkan beberapa fakta tentang teknik pembelajaran yang digunakan selama masa pandemic Covid 19. Dikarenakan pandemik Covid 19 telah merubah pembelajaran di dunia, Indonesia merupakan salah satu yang terpengaruh dan menggunakan system pembelajran jarak jauh. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini mempelajari persepsi siswa mengenai pembelajaran online melalui aplikasi WhatsApps (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di salah satu universitas swasta di Tangerang Selatan. Terdapat 20 peserta yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini yang merupakan mahasiswa semester 2 tahun ajaran 2021/2022. Untk mendapatkan keakuratan data, penulis mengumpulkan data dengan interview melalui Google Meet.. Mahasiswa yang terlibat diminta untuk bergabung kegiatan pembelajaran seperti berbicara, menulis, mendengar, dan membaca. Kemudian, mereka diwawancara tentang pengalaman belajar online. Penelitian qualitative digunakan dengan menggunakan metode naratif untuk mendapatkan pandangan meraka tentang pembelajaran online. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukan bahwa mahasiswa mempunyai pandangan positif terhadapat pembelajaran online. Peggunaan aplikasi WhatsApp sangat mempengaruhi minat mahasiswa dalam pembelajaran online.

Kata Kunci: *Aplikasi WhatsApp, pembelajaran online, persepsi mahasiswa,*

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Covid 19 pandemic has changed everything, including education. Traditional learning and teaching have shifted to a modern one. It is called as Distance Learning (DL). According to The Minister Education and Culture Circular Number 4 of 2020 states that Distance Learning (DL) provides a variety of learning activities from their houses based on their interests and conditions. It is including facilities that are supplied by their own. It is also supported by the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA, 2004), distance education as access to education using tools such as a satellite, audiovisual, graphical, computerized, and multimedia, etc. technology. In sum, it is suggested for teachers to apply a variety of distance learning like Quipper, Rumah Belajar, Ruang Guru, zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp application etc.

It is supported by the fact that young generation in their age are equipped by a lot of knowledge through technology. Based on Arumugam, Wan, Shanthi, & Mello, (2019), social media like Facebook and WhatsApp permits students and teachers to create a learning group. They need to be provided by interactive learning in which they are involved in. So, they can be active in learning something especially English. This learning process is supposed to encourage students' interaction both with teacher and their friends. This might be in the class and after the class ends. Therefore, students are also supposed to be provided by learning media that is enough friendly for them. The language teacher can implement instructional learning to be effective in teaching and learning process (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). In other words, a teacher is expected to deliver a material of learning effectively in their teaching process.

It is already known that young generation is recently explored by technology, so they are quite familiar with kinds of technology such as mobile phones. It is in line with the latest data available on We Are Social (2020) postulating that there are 160 million people or 59% percent of the total population of 272.1 million Indonesians as the use social media actively. Another result of this phenomenon is the average of social media users in Indonesia was age 13 to 34. Because of the fact that young generation or millenial students cannot be separated by their smartphone, it can be assumed that this issue can be used in covering the problems caused Covid 19 in academic situation. For most of all the time, they use the gadget to do

anything like texting their friends, listening to music, browsing something on Google or any other sources, looking for pictures or audio, and reading news or story such as novel. So, there is a tendency for them to access their smartphone frequently in any occasion during teaching-learning process and outside classroom (Ajid et al, 2018).

Moreover, social media has been a foremost part of people in the world, especially for young generation. Mostly they use the technology to find information, make a friend, and express multiple identities (Shin, 2018). It is also in line with Mistar & Embi (2016), state that WhatsApp application can be used to manage or design a learning in which a teacher and a student can discuss, interact and also share their ideas through a text or voice notes. Besides, it is the most popular application for both students and teachers in learning object of study for example English. It is because it seems easier to be applied in the process of studying and learning English.

According to Barhoumi (2015), WhatsApp is a free and convenient application for chatting, sending emotions, and other features that help teaching and learning. WhatsApp application creates online classes that teachers used in group discussions, providing improvements in the education system. It is also supported by Harmer (2007), states that it is also pivotal to build a good rapport between teachers and students that will lead to the positive, enjoyable and respectful relationship. In other words, WhatsApp application can be used easier for both teacher or lecturer and their students because this application has been popular among the students either for students in the school or students at a university.

Moreover, based on some sources of literatures, WhatsApp is one of the well-known applications among young generations as an instructional learning mobile. It is in line with Bouhnik & Deshen; Yebuah & Ewur (2014), stated that WhatsApp application has become as a new potential social networking application which are designed on all current types of devices, and it is operating systems to run both on mobile devices and computers. In other words, this application is believed can be functioned well both on mobile devices and computer. In addition, through WhatsApp application, people are allowed to interact to each other by exchanging the information via chat in sending multimedia messages such as file, image, video, and audio messages (Chan & Holosko, 2017; Church & de Oliveira, 2013). This application has got a special feature to make people possible to chat through a group. They can communicate intensively among the members of group within its boundaries.

However, based on some previous experiences in English class, there are some problems that may cause on online learning. First, the students have low awareness of studying English. So, they tend to be   neglectful to fulfill assignments Second, the students

have low enthusiasm in being active in online class. Next, the students have less enthusiasm in fulfilling activity due to the lack of motivation. The last, students are low in language proficiency. This factor mostly contributes to a wide range of failure in getting information of the study. Therefore, this study focused on some problems: The students have a lack of language proficiency in online class, and the students have a lack of motivation in joining online class. It is already known that people are created differently. They have different own perception on something they think about. They tend to choose something based on they like or dislike. The willingness to like something or not is depend on what they think about they see or perceive. It is in line with a term about perception. Perception is a set of processes something by which an individual is aware of and get an interpretation of information about something such as an object or environment. In other words, perception can be defined as how people look at themselves and the world through people's five senses.

To support the explanation above, there are some definitions about perception stated by some experts. According to Qiong (2017), perception is an experience of a person to get awareness of life or to understand about sensory information. It is also supported by konent (2011), perception is the whole people's understanding about their environment in a form of stimulus meaning. It can be concluded that perception regarding students' is a way how a students understand something including learning process both in the class and out of the class. According to Konings (2007), in the case of teaching and learning, there is a different perception between teachers and students about an issue. The results shows that the attitude of students can be revealed during the process of teaching and learning. Therefore, the perception of students in learning and teaching process in the class can influence the method of both teaching and learning. It is in line with Vermetten et al. (2002:128), stated that students' perception about their environment where they study will influence their behaviour during the class. Besides, it is also useful for teachers to modify their teaching method in the class. Moreover, Qiong (2017) states that the three stages in the process of perception include (1) selection. This stage turns the stimulus of environment into meaningful experience; (2) organization. This stage organizes the information from outside of students in certain ways by getting meaningful patterns; and (3) interpretation. This stage interprets the meaning to what is chosen by stimulus. However, each individual person will have different perception for the same stimulus.

Previously in the pandemic era, the government of Indonesia asked to the society to keep their distance for preventing the covid 19 viruses. This requirement is including in education field. E-learning is one of the solutions relating this issue for all levels. Besides,

Nguyen (2015) stated that E-learning is an application that has been used in America for a long time. This has changed the education from "teacher-centered" to "student-centered." Furthermore, students can use WhatsApp as the media of e-learning because it is simplest. WhatsApp is a favorite application to communicate with others, everybody used it instead of SMS (Short Message Service). Moreover, WhatsApp has several features such as storing messages in groups, attaching photos, attaching videos, attaching files in pdf or word, voice calls, video conferencing and sending link and voice messages. WhatsApp application is the cheapest application than another application for learning. Therefore, WhatsApp application can be used effectively in teaching and learning process such as giving assignment not only for teachers but also for students.

METHOD

This qualitative study was designed primarily as a case study where the perception of the students was documented and analyzed. It is assumed that this approach was significant in getting deeper understanding of the object of the study. According to Creswell (2009, p.23), qualitative research is a tool to investigate and comprehend individual or group in social or human problem. Based on Amanda & Palmer (2006), qualitative research is an approach that focuses on participants' subjective experiences to gain insight into the particular meanings and behaviors of social phenomena. In other words, qualitative research is useful to get a depth information about the participant's experiences.

The participants of the study are from the second semester of English department in one of universities in Tangerang, Indonesia. There are more 30 students in the class. They are gathered in WhatsApp group as an additional application to guide them get material from lecturer. However, the study only used 20 students as the participants who were chosen intentionally based on their activity during the learning in WhatsApp platform.

To get a deeper finding of students' perceptions, a semi-structured interview was conducted to all participants through Google Meet. The study was conducted in order to explore their respond and perspectives toward the implementation of WhatsApp Group in their English class. The interview guide has been prepared before conducting the interview. The students responded to ten open-ended questions in the form of perceptions. The interview responses were examined by the flow model (reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion) by Miles and Huberman (1992). The results of interview data were analyzed to find out the results clearly.

The analysis of all data was conducted qualitatively. The following below is the detail of how all the sources were analyzed. In analyzing the data, there was an interview conducted through Google Meet. The interview was conducted after completing all meeting and discussion on WhatsApp group. The interview contained some questions that relate to the students' experiences on online learning through WhatsApp Group such as their feeling, advantages, disadvantages, or possible problems they may face during the learning. Then, the interview was analyzed and transcribed into words or manuscript to get more data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data was structured based on the participants' perception regarding the use of WhatsApp in their online English classes. Their responses were categorized into two areas as the major theme to analyze the data including the benefits and the drawback of using WhatsApp. It is presented in the following figure.
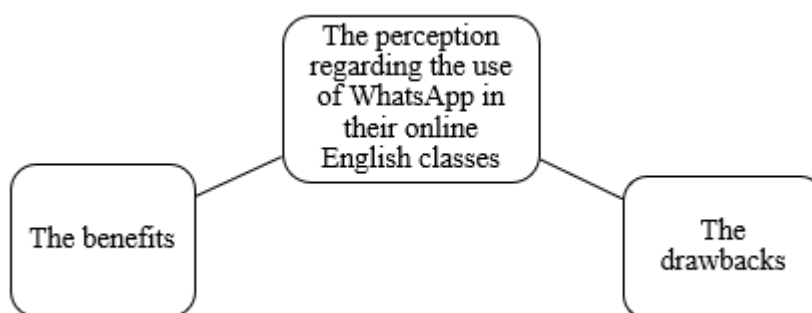
Figure 1. The theme for students' perception regarding the use of WhatsApp in their online English classes

The results showed that through semi-structure interviews some data were obtained. It was revealed clearly that most of students thought that WhatsApp application provides easy learning tools for them as a student stated:

"I think WhatsApp is so not difficult to use because I can be online whenever and wherever. Besides, it is not really difficult like the others such as Zoom or Google meet that need good connection. It gives me easy to upload writing assignment" (Student 3)

"Based on my experience, WhatsApp is the easiest application I've ever used recently. I can be easily uploaded my assignments regarding the writing assignment that the lecturer instructed, not so difficult like the others." (Student 5)

Based on the data, students felt that WhatsApp application gave their easy access to be involved in learning English class, speaking, listening, reading, writing. They felt easier to use the application because they no need to have good connection like other application such Zoom, Google Meet, etc.

Meanwhile, regarding speaking activity on WhatsApp, some students revealed

> *"I feel not really scared to express my opinion because nobody can see me while I'm speaking. I am just talking and recording it. I am sure I can be freer to speak rather than using online platform"* (Student 1)

> *"Sometimes the feeling of scared still happen in my heart but I try to feel more comfortable with this application. I also believe it is better to be like this better than seen directly on other application."* (Students 6)

The responses of the students through interview above indicate that the students felt more comfortable while they were doing speaking assignment. The application allows the students feel free while they were speaking.

In listening skill, some of the students revealed that the application can give them a lot of time to replay the video again and again.

> *"In my free time, I can watch the video again. It gives me a lot of exposure to listen to the audio and understand it better. I can also more focus on the words that seem difficult to be understood."* (Student 10)

> *"Sometimes, I replay the movie just to focus on difficult part to listen. I can get better understanding after playing it again and again. And sometimes I ask my friend in the group of WhatsApp about the difficult words."* (Student 16)

According to those responding above, most of the students felt better to use the application because they can watch the video or movie many times and sometimes discuss with other students in the group about difficult words.

In reading skill, most of the students revealed that they were also able to read the material many times and get better understanding.

> *"I can read the text again when I have free time and the time is still available for me to do it. So, I can find the answer in the text more easily.* (Student 2)

"The text can be read again and again. So, I can get better understanding about the text. I can answer the questions so easy even though at the first time I don't know whether my answer is right or not." (Student 7)

Based on the finding, the students in the second semester feel that reading activities through WhatsApp give them more time to get comprehension of the text. It allows the students to do the assignment many times. Besides, they were explored by some assignments such as reading, listening and speaking task through WhatsApp application. All in all, the results showed that the students' perceptions of WhatsApp as an English learning media in second grade were good. It is in line with Daheri et al. (2020) that the application of the WhatsApp application in the learning process can positively impact the implementation of the learning process. The results of this study were that WhatsApp was quite useful in learning English, especially for sending assignments. It is also supported by Firmansyah (2021), who stated that "students can collect assignments well, feel satisfied with the learning carried out and succeed in obtaining satisfactory or good learning outcomes." In addition, the use of WhatsApp in learning English is very influential on students. However, this result contrasts with Yeboah and Ewur (2014) found that There was a negative impact on students, with distraction from studies, problems related to spelling and grammar. Members send too much massage on a particular topic that can be very distracting for other members.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that students have a good perception on WhatsApp application in their learning process. The students found that WhatApps application was very useful to accomplish the assignments. They can communicate with teacher and other friends more freely without anxiety to speak and express opinion, especially in speaking lesson. The students felt more comfortable in WhatsApp application. They did not need to be worried about their friends' reaction or teachers. Instead, they felt more welcoming to express their idea in learning English during online learning.

There are some suggestions regarding findings and conclusions of the research. First teachers are supposed to make an evaluation of learning methods in the class. Moreover, they are also expected to look for a good media to get a goal of teaching such as WhatsApp application. It can improve students' motivation to learn and involve with the learning process. Second, for another researcher, it is expected to use more creative idea or topics in using another media application in his research to get better results of a study.

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