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THE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' CHALLENGES THROUGH ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN METRO, MINGGIR, AND SAMBAS

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Abstract

This paper discusses the challenges faced by senior high school students in three remote areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. It reports data from an original qualitative study to investigate learning experiences concerning an aspect of their learning practice: The challenges in sustaining the digital era for English language teaching-learning in Metro, Minggir, and Sambas during online learning. There are 96 senior high school students enrolled at three schools in Metro, Minggir, and Sambas. Rely on qualitative data analysis from online surveys and semi-structured interviews. By providing concrete examples, those participants offer insight into challenges during the online class. Our findings show that senior high school students' face several main challenges during online learning: unsteady networks, technical issues, and exposure to more distractions. Therefore, Whatsapp platform is the most frequently used by senior high school students in Metro, Minggir, and Sambas during online learning. The goal of this study is to investigate the challenges that occur when implementing digital learning through online classes in remote areas. It brings forward the picture of fully online learning conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic on online settings in remote areas in Indonesia.

Keywords: challenges, COVID-19, online learning, pandemic, remote areas, senior high school students

Introduction

Since the end of March 2020, the government announced some regulations to minimize the spread of COVID-19 which had come into Indonesia on 2 March 2020 (Gorbiano, M. I. 2020). The regulations are in the form of working from home, praying from home, and learning from home or home-schooling for all students from preschool to higher education students' level (Regulation of Indonesian Government No.21, 2020). Social distancing and physical distancing, using a mask, and also avoiding the 3Cs (spaces that are closed, crowded, or involve close contact)

are some standards that the World Health Organization (2019) has recommended to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 viruses. Indonesia's Education and Cultural Minister also ordered all of the educational activities being held by doing remote teaching and online learning. At the beginning of the implementation of online learning, not only teachers but also all of the students from every level suffer from the new situation. According to the Jakarta office in UNICEF as cited in Mulyanto (2021), in Indonesia, the lives of around 68 million young people from early childhood students until higher education students' level have been affected by COVID-19 throughout this past year.

The implementation of online learning during the pandemic of COVID-19 has an important role in maximizing Indonesian youth's learning process. Fortunately, the use of online digital tools has already been used during face-to-face learning. All of the educators have to choose the appropriate media that can be used for online learning activities. There are two types of learning tools during online learning, asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous learning is a flexible mode of teaching and learning because the students are already being provided with material in form of PowerPoint presentations, audio, video, handouts, and articles (Perveen, 2016). The materials usually can be accessed anytime, anywhere, and anyplace. Asynchronous learning makes students more autonomous, self-study, and student-centered (Murphy, & Barbour, 2011). Meanwhile, synchronous learning takes place simultaneously at the same time which provides an opportunity for teacher-student and student-student interaction because the teacher and students can interact and collaborate in the same or real-time. The use of video conferencing applications, web conferences through polls, surveys, and questions and answer sessions are examples of synchronous learning activities (Perveen, 2016). According to Murphy et al. (2011), the synchronous mode is more teacher-oriented as opposed to asynchronous learning.

Almost all of the students, educators, parents, and society discover their problems regarding skills, knowledge, habits, infrastructure, technology, time, costs, and so on (Atsani, 2020 as cited in Yuzulia, 2021). Zhong as cited in Yuzulia (2020, 2021) mentions that inadequate access, the lack of technology, unequal internet access, students participation and student-teacher interaction are some major factors affecting the application of online learning. Students also feel a lack of motivation and cannot understand the lesson carefully during online learning (Yuzulia, 2021). From those previous studies about students' challenges during online learning, this paper is conducted to find out:

- 1) What are the most appropriate applications that are used by English teachers in learning during online periods in *Metro, Sleman, and Sambas*?
- 2) What are the challenges that are experienced by senior high school students in learning English during online learning in *Metro, Sleman, and Sambas*?

Commissioner of National Commission for Child Protection, Retno Listyarti said there are still many students who do not have the freedom to take part in online learning, since the economy of each student is different and online learning has made the students feel less rest and stress (Aulia, 2020). The present study showed that students in some remote areas, especially in *Metro, Sleman, and Sambas* still have some challenges due to learning English during online learning.

Literature Review

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

The use of online learning in English Language Learning has been promoted since COVID-19 Pandemic. It is important to realize that technology is in all aspects of today's teachers-students' lives. Therefore, the utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is potentially enabling tools for educational change. ICT itself consists of the internet, the web, cell phones, computers, video conferencing, and other media applications. Users in different places can communicate in real time and facilitate their work by using technologies such as instant messaging, video conferencing, social networking like Whatsapp, Facebook, and instagram, etc (Malik et al., 2021). Using appropriate tools can help in accessing education, raising educational quality, making teaching-learning engaging and connecting to real-life (Malik & Godara, 2020). However, implementation of ICT into teaching-learning during online learning finds struggles. Several factors influencing the implementation of ICT, Balanskat et al.,(2007) described some factors such as teacher-level, school-level, and system-level. Related to teacher-level, teaching experience is one of the most important factors that influences the integration of ICT. Teacher experience has a significant correlation between the use of technology, Gorder (2008) claimed that the use of computers has a relevant connection to technological comfort level and teacher-perceived students needs. In school- level, accessibility is a necessary condition when accessing ICT tools in schools (Plomp, et al., 2009). Most senior high school teachers are working from school during this online learning. Teachers and students, especially those in remote areas need support on the availability and accessibility of ICT resources such as internet connection, hardware, software, etc to adopt and integrate ICT during online learning. Technical support also can be an issue when integrating ICT, it is included at the system-level. Basically, there are no online classes without wasting time troubleshooting hardware and software problems (Korte & Husing, 2007). The most factors (barriers) that discourage the use of ICT in teaching-learning were reviewed, there were teaching experience, accessibility, and technical support.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

During COVID-19 Pandemic, teaching and learning have been strongly changing. Therefore, the use of mobile technologies is a must for most schools. According to Kamasak et al., (2021), the use of mobile-assisted learning in education, especially language learning, is turned to make and use mobile learning the only practical and applicable learning. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is a self-paced learning that is supported and facilitated by some devices such as mobile phones, tablets, or pads for language learning and teaching (Hoi, 2020; Ezra & Cohen, 2018; Shi, Luo & HE, 2017; Sun et al.,2017). It's not common if most senior high school students frequently use their mobile phones when they study at home during online learning. In remote areas, this study found that the use of mobile phones was higher than other devices like computers, laptops, tablets, etc. The use of various functions of mobile devices could help students to obtain their freedom to access learning materials and experience their personal studying (Zou et al., 2018; Wu, 2016). MALL in development of English Language Skills, Demouy and Kukulska-Hulme (2010) studied if the students found mobile devices such as mobile phones

helpful to develop students' listening and speaking skills. However, the use of MALL also found the barriers, according to Klimova (2018) mentioned that MALL offered some limitations such as technical issues, high costs of devices, and lack of human contact. Moreover, it is inherent the lack of students' attention caused by mobile phone multi tasking (p. 2).

Research Methodology

Study Design

This study was conducted in three senior high schools in remote areas that are *SMA Negeri 3 Metro (Lampung)*, *SMA Negeri 1 Minggir, (Yogyakarta)*, and *SMA Santo Bonaventura Sambas (Kalimantan Barat)*. It belongs to qualitative research which investigates not only the challenges in implementing digital learning but also the use of platforms and the intensity of face to face during online learning in remote areas. This research used case study. According to Cresswell (2011), the selected cases can be school members such as students, teachers or staff schools.

Participants

Table 1. Participants of the Research

School Origin	Students Frequency	Percentage
SMA Negeri 3 Metro, Metro, Lampung	25	26%
SMA Negeri 1 Minggir, Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta	52	54,2%
SMA Santo Bonaventura Sambas, Sambas, Kalimantan Barat	19	19,8%
Total data	96	100%

Based on the table above, there were 96 senior high school students' from three different schools. This study used a sampling technique by distributing questionnaires through Google Form to Senior High School students in three regions in Indonesia, namely Metro, Minggir, and Sambas. The selection of those schools was based on the implementation of online learning in remote areas. The largest group of student participants 54,2% (n=52) was from *SMA Negeri 1 Minggir*, followed by those from *SMA Negeri 3 Metro* 26% (n=25), and the smaller group of students 19,8% (n=19) was from *SMA Santo Bonaventura Sambas*.

Data Collection

The data obtained through two steps: online surveys by distributing questionnaires through Google Form and semi-structured interviews. The first step was carried out using online surveys to analyze the frequency of students' responses through questionnaires. It consisted of 13 questions regarding the use of digital learning in online classes and 2 open-ended questions. Students were asked to select platforms to be most frequently used from Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Whatsapp group. The researchers assigned numbers to the different options regarding students' perspective in the use of digital learning in online classes such as (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The result was obtained from frequency and percentage of the students' responses to achieve cumulative scores. The second step was done by semi-structured

interviews with six students through a WhatsApp voice call to triangulate the data. The result of the interviews supported the result accomplished from questionnaires.

Data Analysis

After the responses were recorded, the final undertaking was data analysis. This study was examined by thematic analysis to identify and evaluate by participants. Not only thematic analysis for open-ended interviews but descriptive analysis also carried out this study using percentage. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is a popular method for qualitative research that is accessible and flexible. It is a way to identify responses in written and spoken and classify those commonalities. In descriptive analysis, it is more concerned with how something has happened using survey tools like questionnaires through Google Form to gather data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Commonly, there were disagreements between researchers. However, we could get through rechecking and discussing to achieve agreement.

Findings and Discussion

In the questionnaire, the students were asked to select the applications that are being used in learning English during online learning. The students were also asked to give their opinion based on the provided questions related to the challenges experienced by them during online learning.

Table 2. The Facilitations that Being Used in Learning English during Online Learning

Facilitation	Frequency	Percentage
Personal Computer	6	6,3%
Laptop	37	38,5%
Handphone	94	97,9%
Internet Quota	55	57,3%
Wi-Fi	47	49%

Based on table 2, we can conclude that almost all of the participants 97,9% (n=94) are using their handphones to do online learning. Around 38,5% of the participants are using their laptops. In order to stay connected with the internet, around 57,3% (n=55) participants are using their mobile data or internet quota, and around 49% (n=47) are using Wi-Fi.

Table 3. The Application that Being Used in Learning English during Online Learning

Applications	Students Frequency	Percentage
WhatsApp (WA Group)	85	88,5%
Google Classroom	53	55,2%
Google Meet	21	21,9%
Zoom Meeting	2	2.1%

Based on table 3, we can conclude the most appropriate application that is being used by senior high school students' in *Metro*, *Minggir*, and *Sambas* is

WhatsApp (WhatsApp Group) which has been voted on by 85 students (88,5%). The second highest application is Google Classroom 53 voters (55,2%), which has been used as the learning management system (LMS) for the students, especially since most of the voters are from the students of *SMA Negeri 1 Minggir, Yogyakarta*. Google Meet and Zoom Meeting, which are the applications for conducting video conferences, got the lowest score. There were only 21 voters (21,9%) that had the experience of using Google Meet mostly from *SMA Santo Bonaventura Sambas, Kalimantan Barat* and only 2 voters (2.1%) for the Zoom Meeting application. The table below describes the student's perspective on the use of online learning. There are eight questions from the questionnaire. It shows that they have a different perspective from other students.

Table 4. Summarized Results on Students' Perspective on the Use of Online Learning

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
The students can improve their English skills during online learning	9,4%	13,5%	40,6%	27,1%	9,4%
The students feel happy while learning English through online learning	9,4%	13,5%	37,5%	29,2%	10,4%
Online learning helps us to interact with teacher and classmates	5,2%	15,6%	32,3%	38,5%	8,3%
The students can easily understand English materials through online learning	13,5%	14,6%	37,5%	29,2%	5,2%
The students can participate actively through online learning activities	10,4%	10,4%	38,5%	30,2%	10,4%
The students have sufficient Internet quota to access online learning	11,5%	12,5%	31,3%	28,1%	16,7%
The students get easily distracted and cannot be focus by social media's notification while doing online learning	11,5%	18,8%	39,6%	17,7%	12,5%
The students get easily distracted by any sounds while doing online learning	10,4%	14,6%	29,2%	27,1%	18,8%

Based on table 4, we can find the students' perceptions while learning English during online learning especially in Metro, Minggir, and Sambas. From the first statement result, we can know that around 40,6 % of the students are neutral with the statement that they can improve their English skills during online learning. Around 36,5 % of students agree that they can improve their English skills, meanwhile around 22,9 % of the students disagree that they can improve their English skills. From these results we can conclude that not all of the students feel their English skills improved, only several of them feel the improvement of their English skills.

"I feel my English skills improve a lot from the provided materials and the task that is given by the teacher, I always reread and relisten to catch up with the materials and now I think my English is better than last time when I was in Junior High School level."

“I don’t feel like I improve my English skill during online classes because my teacher just gives me a picture of the material and sends the material through the WhatsApp group. Sometimes, there is no class and we just do the attendance through the WhatsApp group”

In the second statement result, we can see that around 37,5% of the students are neutral with the statement that they feel happy while learning English through online learning. Around 39,6% of the students agree with the statement, meanwhile there are around 22,9% of the students who disagree with the statement. From this section, we can conclude that some of the students enjoy their online learning but there are a lot of the students who feel normal while attending online learning.

“I like online learning because I can spend my time doing other things, I can learn from various media, but I also miss the offline classes”

“I like online learning because I don’t need to come early in the morning to school.”

In the third statement result, around 32,3% of the students feel neutral with the statement online learning can help the students to interact with teacher and classmate. About 46,8% of the students agree with the statement, meanwhile there are around 20,8% of the students who disagree with it. From these results, we can conclude almost a half of the students feel they can keep their interaction well with their teacher and classmates during online learning.

“During this pandemic situation, I am glad that I can stay connected and always interact with my teacher and my friends through online media.”

“My teacher just uses WhatsApp to share the information.”

In the fourth statement result, around 37,5% of the students feel neutral about the statement that they can easily understand English materials through online learning. About 34,4% of the students agree with the statement, while the rest around 28,1% of the students disagree with it. From these results, we can conclude that a lot of students are still struggling to understand English materials while doing online learning. Some of the students said that they cannot understand English language since they are not used to learning English.

“I cannot easily understand what my teacher said, I need to re-read and re-play the provided materials and sometimes I ask my teacher to explain more.”

“I cannot understand if I just read the material that my teacher gives to me. So, I take tutoring to help me understand the lesson.”

“I understand the material. Sometimes, I feel awkward when I ask my teacher about the thing that I don’t understand because this is the first time for her to teach my class.”

In the fifth statement result, around 38,5% of the students feel neutral with the statement they can participate actively through online learning activities. About 40,6% of the students agree with that statement while the rest 20,8% of the students disagree with it. From those results, we can conclude that almost half of the students said they participate actively in learning English through online learning activities.

“I like learning English through online learning, when we use g-meets I participate actively by answering my teacher’s question and sometimes I also ask him to repeat his words because my signal is lagging.”

“When I don’t satisfied enough with the result of the task, I ask my teacher to give me an additional task.”

In the sixth statement result, around 31,3% of the students feel neutral with the statement they have sufficient Internet quota to access online learning. About 44,8%

of the students agree with the statement while the rest 24% of the students disagree. From those results, we can conclude that most students have sufficient internet quota to do online learning.

“I have Wi-Fi at my house, so I can access all the media for online learning and I have an internet quota from the government.”

“Last semester, I got learning quota by KEMENDIKBUD but I changed my number phone and now I used my own Internet quota to do online learning, although sometimes when I am running out my quota I will as soon as possible buy the quota and send my apology to my teacher if I cannot join the online activities.”

“I have Wi-Fi at my house and my parents give me an internet quota every two months.”

In the seventh statement, around 30,3% of the students do not get distracted by social media notifications and they cannot focus while doing online learning. About 39,6% of the students feel neutral with the statement about students getting easily distracted and cannot be focused by social media's notification while doing online learning, while around 30,2% agree with that statement. From those results, we can conclude that students feel neutral about the distraction from social media's notification while doing online learning.

“I use my handphone to connect with online learning, sometimes there are some notifications from Instagram and TikTok but I hold myself to keep focus on my online learning schedule.”

“There are many notifications on my phone but I open it after I have finished my class.”

In the last statement, around 25% of students disagree with the statement about students getting easily disturbed by any sound while doing online learning. Around 29,2% of students feel neutral about that statement and 45,9% of students agree with that statement. From those results, we can conclude that most students agree that they feel distracted by any sound while doing online learning at home.

“When I wanted to record a video for my homework, I got distracted by any sound near my house.”

“I think some noisy sounds are not really influencing me in studying but sometimes my concentration is broken therefore I move to another place.”

From all of the results above we can conclude that the Senior High School students in Metro, Minggir, and Sambas are already coping with online learning. Although there are still some challenges especially for the internet connection and getting distracted with any sound from their house and the notification from their social media. From our interview session with the total six chosen students from three separate schools, we can know that only two students are comfortable learning English through online learning, while there are four students who are still comfortable with offline or face-to-face learning. They hope this pandemic will end soon so they can attend normal classes just like what they used to be in the normal situation.

“If I have to choose whether online learning or offline learning, I choose online learning because I like self-directed learning. I like to surf the Internet not only from the materials by the teacher but also watch other videos which relate to the topic. Online learning makes me more relaxed, I can learn and also eat some snacks, and the time for study is not tight. I also can do other things since I access the internet in my home.” - Alvin, a student from SMA Santo Bonaventura

“It is more effective when we do face-to-face learning. It is easy for me to ask my teacher or my friends if I don’t understand the lesson. Sometimes, there is a technical problem when we do the exam using the LMS.”

“I prefer offline learning because it has real interaction with my teachers and my classmates. I have struggled during this online learning because I use kuota data to join the class therefore I must have enough kuota. Moreover, sometimes my internet connection is unstable.”-Zahra from SMA Negeri 1 Minggir

“I am more understanding and confident when having offline learning rather than online learning therefore I choose offline learning because I can’t quite catch what my teacher is explaining. However, it’s more flexible using online learning.”-Tiara from SMA Negeri 1 Minggir

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research of senior high school students' challenges in learning English through online learning in Metro, Minggir, and Sambas, it can be concluded that WhatsApp is the most appropriate application that is easy to use, accessible, and does not use a lot of quota data. From the discussion above, it can be concluded that although it has already been one year of online learning, the implementation of using digital learning during online classes in remote areas still encourages many problems such as internet connection, technical issues, lack of interactions, lack of students' self-learning, and noisy sound distractions. The researchers believe that in the future research the senior high school students can pass their challenges and improve their English skills through various online learning activities which can be suitable for the remote areas' struggles. Furthermore, it will be more fun to know the effects of using various digital applications in order to teach English, especially in remote areas.

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