Challenges In Learning English Online During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Non-English Department Students

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Abstract

A B S T R A K


ABSTRACT

Several challenges are faced in implementing online learning, such as being less familiar with online learning. This study aimed to analyze the challenges faced by students majoring in Non-English Education in online English learning during the Covid 19 pandemic. The research design used was descriptive and qualitative. Data were obtained from 412 students majoring in Non-English Education. Data collection techniques used were questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was made in a google form and filled out by respondents online, while the structured interview technique was carried out using the Zoom application. Data analysis activities include data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results showed that the biggest challenge came from students' psychological problems, such as; limited opportunities to interact with lecturers and colleagues directly, lack of feedback or clarification from lecturers or colleagues, more independent learning to solve problems, and lack of student-centered learning activities. Another big challenge is technical problems such as an unsupported internet network, limited internet access, or an unstable internet connection.

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a type of coronavirus that was first discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Indonesia was in early March 2020. The impact of this pandemic is not only on the economy and transportation, but also in the world of education (Fortuna et al., 2020; Maatuk et al., 2021). As an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, WHO recommends to stop the activities that will potentially cause crowds (Alchamdani et al., 2020; Indrawati et al., 2020). Therefore, the Indonesian government issued a social distancing policy, which was subsequently issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture Circular Letter, Directorate of Higher
Education No. 1 of 2020 regarding the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 in the world of Education (Churiyah et al., 2020; Yunita et al., 2021). In this circular, the Ministry of Education and Culture instructs to conduct distance learning and study from home (Study From Home / SFH). This policy became known as online or in-network learning (Lase et al., 2021; Syauqi et al., 2020). The determination of learning from home or online learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic has provided an overview of the continuity of the world of education in the future through technological assistance (Khatoooy & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Mpungose, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2020). Along with changes in the learning system due to the impact of the pandemic, learning was carried out through distance learning using online media, either using mobile phones, PCs, or laptops. Online learning is learning which use the internet network with accessibility, connectivity, flexibility and ability to spawn various types learning interactions (Kimkong Heng & Koemhong Sol, 2020; Rhim & Han, 2020). This online learning need device support like a smartphone or telephone android, laptop, computer, tablet, and iphone that can be used to access information anytime and anywhere (Khatoooy & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2020). The change in the learning system to online makes lecturers and students feel nervous. It must be challenging for them while doing virtual class all with technology.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the learning system from conventional systems to learning with electronic media and online applications (Mpungose, 2021; Tang et al., 2021). It is very essential for online learning because that is carried out remotely with the help of electronic devices such as tablets, smart phones, laptops, and computers that require an internet connection (Aini et al., 2020; Faizah et al., 2021; Maulana, 2021). Online teaching and learning incorporates the use of the internet to deliver material to students in the form of video tutorials, presentations and texts. Its main aim is to impart knowledge to students and enable them to learn at their own pace. Meanwhile online classes can be conducted through video conferences, and assignments can be submitted using Google media (Djamdjuri et al., 2020; Nikdel Teymori & Fardin, 2020). The teaching and learning process from elementary to tertiary education levels currently uses technology-based learning, starting from the learning process, seminars, and real work lectures carried out online. This is also in line who has developed Schoology based E-learning to support the learning process of High school students in Sumatera Selatan (Supratman & Purwaningtias, 2018). The high school students even have been introduced to technology-based learning before the pandemic begin. The result showed that, Schoology based E-learning add another innovation for the teacher to share the material, discussion, and assignment to the students by the features available in this learning platform.

Even though online learning is the most appropriate solution during a pandemic, however, the use of technology in education is a challenge and even a threat for institutions that are not accustomed to using technology. There are several challenges faced in implementing online learning, such as; First, less familiar with online learning, because online learning is not familiar to many families in Indonesia, both in cities and villages. Learning from home is a new thing for many Indonesian families and even a surprise, especially for parents who work outside the home (Fikri et al., 2021; Rachmat & Krisnadi, 2020). Second, psychological problems of students, when students in Indonesia are accustomed to the face-to-face learning process in class. Online learning causes psychological problems for students, where they are accustomed to interacting physically with teachers, as well as their peers (Arizona et al., 2020; Primasari & Zulela, 2021). Third, limited mastery of technology, because there are still many teachers or students who have not mastered technology. There are still many teachers and students who have not been able to maximally use online media designed with information technology (Hutauruk & Sidabutar, 2020; Windhiyana, 2020). Fourth, limited facilities and infrastructure, limited facilities and infrastructure are also a trigger for the slow process of online education. Facilities and infrastructure are the main support for the implementation of online learning. If the facilities do not meet, it will automatically hinder the pace of development of online learning (Amalia et al., 2020; Rachmat & Krisnadi, 2020). Fifth, limited internet access is an obstacle in online learning. In addition to limited internet access, limited budgets, limited quotas, and the declining purchasing power of the people due to economic difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic are other obstacles in online learning.

The results of the studies show several challenges related to the unsupported infrastructure, the unstable internet networks and the cost of buying quotas. These are the biggest troubles often faced by the students while doing online learning because tools and connection are the prime to accelerate with the process of online learning. As consequence, most students cannot follow online learning well. Many students claim to be bored and less focused when studying online (Arizona et al., 2020; Fikri et al., 2021). Other related studies that raised issue about challenges of online learning, who exposed students’ motivation of online learning during pandemic (Cahyani et al., 2020). Another challenge is a less conducive learning atmosphere, which causes students to not be able to focus on learning, so there must be cooperation and parental support so that students can continue to study quietly (Irfan et al., 2020;
Maatuk et al., 2021). There are several obstacles faced in online learning, including the limitations of teachers in explaining learning materials related to the variety of learning methods carried out. Another obstacle that occurs is related to learning time which makes it difficult to explain, explain, strengthen, enrich learning materials, and clarify materials (Hermanto et al., 2021; Kimkong Heng & Koemhong Sol, 2020). Teachers have limited time in providing explanations to students satisfactorily because it is quite difficult to give them online. In technical terms, some students have devices that do not have certain features such as videos and certain document opening features so that students have limitations in getting materials and doing assignments and projects given.

In line with the challenges of online learning, the unsupported infrastructure; there are some children who do not have a smartphone or laptop, unsupported features on smartphone or laptop, non-android cellphone, and even some students do not master technology (Anugrahana, 2020). By those challenges found in several research, the researcher curious to conduct the same research to identify the challenges felt by non-English Education Department students in carrying out the online learning process in English courses. English course as one of the personality development courses in universities cannot be separated from the application of this online learning system. English courses are given to former students as a general course (MKU) at Undiksha. The courses given in the first semester (1 or 2) with 2 credits point are applied as general courses in universities, where English is very important to be mastered by all students which is intended as a medium for personality development. English has become a world language, which means that many countries in the world consider English as their second language (Mauliate et al., 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2020; Pakpahan et al., 2021). This shows how important English is to learn. The finding of this research are expected to provide some insights about the factors that could become challenges felt by non-English Education Department students in carrying out the online learning process in English courses. Thus, the lecturer, students, other related stake holder could prepared themselves to enhance the efficacy of online learning during the pandemic. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the challenges faced by students majoring in non-English Education Department in online English learning during the Covid 19 pandemic.

2. METHODS

The present research used qualitative approach where the result presented descriptively. Qualitative research is a multi-method that focuses, includes interpretation, a natural approach to the subject matter (Sugiyono, 2018). The data required in this study was primary data obtained from 412 students majoring in non-English department who took general English courses/MPK as the research sample. The techniques of the data collection were questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire that was used was an open questionnaire where the researcher had provided answer choices but the respondents were able to write down additional information to clarify and elaborate the answers. The questionnaire was made in the form of a Google form and was distributed to all respondents online. The data were also taken from structured interviews techniques were carried out with research subjects. In this technique, the researcher used an interview guide instrument that consisted of several questions that had been prepared in advance by the researcher. In this study, the interviews were conducted several times through Zoom meeting as a triangulation technique so that the data obtained is more valid. After the data were gathered, descriptive qualitative analysis was conducted. This technique was used to interpret the meaning of the data obtained. All data was transcribed from questionnaire and interviews. The data obtained from the questionnaire results was classified and given meaning to draw conclusions. The processes of data analysis in this study were, that the data was selected, determined, then simplified, and finally interpreted descriptively. In addition, data reduction was carried out to avoid bias in the research results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

To get the data, the questionnaires that had been distributed to the respondents, as well as the results of structured interviews, were analyzed descriptively to interpret the data. The questioner given, consisted of 5 choices range; Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Uncertainty (U), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). Based on data analysis shows a significant number where the first component item shows 120 (29%) and 111 (27%) students answer strongly disagree and disagree, that learning English online is a new method for them. It can be concluded that online learning methods is starting to be accepted and starting to become a habit in the current learning system. From the results of the interviews, several students also mention that they have been using the online method since the beginning of the
pandemic, which was early March 2020. They are required to be able to follow online learning methods in all courses using various learning platforms according to the requirement of the lecturer. The difficulty in adapting to online learning is in line with the statement of the third statement, namely that they are easily turns to other sites other than the learning site provided. From the questionnaire data, 31% of students answered disagree, and 22% answered doubtful. This is supported by a number of different situations, such as the device they use when learning online, and the reason they are easily redirected to other sites. Boredom in attending online lectures sometimes occurs, especially for those who are not familiar with presenting material in a virtual way. The description of the results of the questionnaire related to students’ psychological problems in online learning is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Students’ Responds toward Psychological Problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have interactions (discussing material with groups and making conversations with colleagues) which are limited to learning English online</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have limited opportunities to interact with lecturers and students directly and freely</td>
<td>(1%)</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
<td>(26%)</td>
<td>(47%)</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received less feedback or clarification from lecturers or colleagues on online English learning</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was led to learn more independently and solve my own problems during online English learning</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
<td>(16%)</td>
<td>(36%)</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that all activities in learning English online, such as giving materials, assignments, and discussions, are only centered and sourced from the lecturer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel less motivated and active in learning English online</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s better to get a direct explanation than to read a long explanation of the material</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
<td>(22%)</td>
<td>(36%)</td>
<td>(19%)</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Observing the exposure of the results of the questionnaire related to the psychological problems of students in online learning, it can be seen that students do feel some things psychologically. In general, based on data obtained from both questionnaires and interviews, students tend to feel isolated and unmotivated. To confirm this, the results of the questionnaire with statement items related to the opportunity to get limited interaction in online learning can be seen from the percentage of the following answer choices: 1% of students chose strongly disagree, 9% chose disagree, 26% chose uncertainly, 47% chose agree and 17% chose strongly agree. These results indicate that most students agree that learning English online provides fewer opportunities to interact (outside the network) perceived by students. It should be noted that the interaction referred to in this study is interaction in the form of feedback or clarification and discussion involving students and lecturers as well as between students themselves.

In addition to the lack of interaction, learning motivation is also an important finding in this study. In terms of learning motivation, based on data analysis, something interesting was found. From the results of questionnaires and interviews, it is known that students feel 2 contradictory things, on the one hand learning English online can motivate students to learn. The conclusion drawn can be seen from the acquisition of student answers on the questionnaire statement items related to learning English by reducing the asking for learning. The results of the questionnaire show that there are 9% of students who answered strongly disagree, while 22% of students answered disagree, 36% of students answered uncertainly, 19% of students answered agree and 14% of students answered strongly agree. This is corroborated by the results of interviews where students said that there are features of learning activities found on online learning platforms that can increase student interest in learning. For example, the use of quizzes or evaluations with an automatic and transparent scoring system so that students can see for themselves the development of their learning outcomes without having to wait for the evaluation results from the lecturer. This is what gives them their own motivation to take part in learning. Students’ Responses to the Limitations of Technology Mastery are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Students’ Respond toward Limited Mastery of Technology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have lack skills to use hardware (hardware: mobile phones, computers, etc.) to support online</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21%)</td>
<td>(32%)</td>
<td>(23%)</td>
<td>(16%)</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of mastery of technology, the components of limited mastery of technology are divided into two, namely limited skills in operating hardware; laptops, computers, smart devices, etc., as well as limited skills in software applications; learning platforms (edmodo, google meet, zoom, schoology, etc.). In accordance with the tabulated data, the problem of mastering technology in this case such as hardware and software is not a challenge faced by most Undiksha students. This is evident from the tabulation results which show a significant percentage, where 131 (32%) students disagree with the statement that mentions their lack of mastery or proficiency in operating hardware and 162 (39%) students disagree with the statement that mentions lack of mastery. or their proficiency in software applications. So from this third component, it can be concluded that mastery of technology in this case students’ skills in using hardware and software applications, is not a big obstacle for them in participating in online learning. Student Responses to Limited Facilities and Infrastructure are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students’ Respond toward Limited Facilities and Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component item</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have lack skills in operating applications (schoology, edmodo, google classroom, etc.) used in online English learning</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(21%)</td>
<td>(39%)</td>
<td>(21%)</td>
<td>(11%)</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
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In addition to having difficulty accessing learning resources, data from the tabulation of questionnaires and interviews conducted with students also showed that students were also faced with economic problems, where 168 (41%) students stated strongly agree and 114 (28%) students agreed with the second component item. They have a limited budget in purchasing quotas to access material resources during online English learning. Large-scale restrictions imposed by the government have a broad impact on the production process, distribution, and other operational activities which ultimately disrupt economic performance, increase unemployment and poverty, thus affecting the economic condition of the community. This also has an impact on the field of online education. Many parents/students cannot afford internet quota, which is a supporting component in the online learning process. The next limitation is the difficulty of opening documents, doing tasks and projects given because there are features that do not exist on the device used. Although the data from the questionnaire tends to be sloping, but based on the results of interviews, they said that there are some applications that cannot be downloaded through their smart devices, due to various factors, one of which is the small storage capacity of their smartphone. In addition, because all courses are carried out online, and all lecturers try to provide the best material or teaching, often the smart devices they use for online lectures become errors and slow, due to insufficient storage power and even materials or the assignments given by the lecturers cannot be downloaded. Student Responses to Internet Access Limitations are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Students’ Respond toward Limited Internet Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component item</th>
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<th>D</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have difficulty with internet connection while participating in online learning (sudden disconnection of internet network)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5%)</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
<td>(23%)</td>
<td>(34%)</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that learning is ineffective and takes up internet quota when interacting with lecturers because I have to wait for one party to finish before the other party can comment</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7%)</td>
<td>(11%)</td>
<td>(21%)</td>
<td>(26%)</td>
<td>(35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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From the data from the tabulation of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that limited internet access is also another obstacle in the online learning process. There are two statement component items related to internet limitations which are stated in the questionnaire. The first component is that students experience difficulties in terms of the internet network while participating in online learning (sudden disconnection of the internet network). It can be seen in the table, that 142 (34%) students agreed, and another 122 (30%) strongly agreed. This is reinforced by the results of interviews conducted at random, where most of the students experienced internet network problems. Students gave an example, when conducting lectures using Zoom, or Google Meet, the network suddenly disconnected. This situation makes students find it difficult to understand what is conveyed by the lecturer and other friends as a whole. This shows that the internet network is the main thing in online learning.

Discussion

The interviews also show that students adjust to online learning, especially when responding to lecturers and when conspiring. Adapting according to students are not accustomed to studying for hours in front of a screen. These challenges provide an evaluation for lecturers to create fun online learning variations to overcome the above challenges (Hanif et al., 2018; Maatuk et al., 2021). Constraints in online learning on the third point, namely the use of a pedagogical approach that requires more effort in motivating and activating students in online learning. To encourage students, lecturers can always create new, exciting, and fun online learning so that the challenges students face (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Hermanto et al., 2021; Irfan et al., 2020). In addition, students feel that not all their questions or desires can be facilitated by the online learning system considering the technical limitations mentioned above. It is directly related to previous research that states that online learning causes psychological problems in students who are accustomed to interacting physically with teachers and their peers (Fikri et al., 2021; Mastoah & Zulaela, 2020; Rigianti, 2020). This obstacle is caused by limited time providing explanations to students online because it is difficult to give them online.

On the other hand, online English learning also reduces students’ learning motivation. It returns to technical problems that often occur in online learning, such as internet connection problems that cause learning to be ineffective. From the results of the interviews, it was also found that the quality of the video or audio was not particularly supportive, thus making their concentration dispersed when online learning was carried out. They were distracted by the technical obstacles they faced. It indirectly triggers a decrease in student interest in learning. The decrease in students’ learning motivation is also influenced by the absence of direct interaction with their peers (Agustin et al., 2020; Aisiah & Firza, 2019). Limited internet access is an obstacle in online learning (Fikri et al., 2021; Primasari & Zulela, 2021). Another related study that did the same research also found the same problem. Some of the challenges are related to unsupported infrastructure, unstable internet networks, and the cost of purchasing quotas. In addition, these limitations are the biggest challenges in online learning (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020; Suni Astini, 2020; Surahman et al., 2020; Widodo & Nursaptini, 2020). So in online learning, a network or internet connection becomes the primary support/key to smooth online learning. As a result of the previous limitations, students felt that learning was ineffective and consumed internet quota when interacting with lecturers or friends because they had to wait for one party to finish before the other party could comment.

Based on students’ responses to the limitations of mastery of technology, students stated that the ability to use laptops or intelligent devices was not a big problem. According to them, their daily life is always in contact with these devices. They can also quickly learn how to access various learning platforms through tutorials on YouTube. This finding is also in line with previous research that says that the teaching and learning process from primary education to higher education uses technology-based learning, starting from the learning process, seminars, and actual work lectures carried out online (Barakhsanova et al., 2020; Hendawi & Nosair, 2020; Li et al., 2018). Especially now that students have been introduced to technology-based learning (Cohn, 2016; Liao et al., 2018; Wang, 2020). So, they are already familiar with the use of technology. Some of them also study self-taught and with peers. It gives satisfaction when they can master how to apply an application independently.

In carrying out online learning, facilities and infrastructure are very important to support the smooth running of online learning (Fu & Hwang, 2018; Patricia, 2020; Shishigui et al., 2018). Online learning is carried out remotely with the help of electronic devices such as tablets, smartphones, laptops, and computers that require an internet connection (Nurrohma & Adistana, 2019; Palevi et al., 2020; Maulana Reza Palevi et al., 2020). If these tools cannot be met, online learning cannot be adequately implemented. The learning system is carried out online. Learning resources are also obtained online. However, in Indonesia, the facilities and infrastructure for online learning are still minimal. Therefore, many students have difficulty accessing the textbooks used in the form of e-books to support online English learning. It can be seen from the questionnaire tabulation data, which shows that some students...
still have difficulty accessing textbooks in the form of e-books to support online learning. It is reinforced by the results of unstructured interviews carried out with students, where students also say they have limitations in terms of facilities and infrastructure. Students have difficulty accessing learning resources in the form of e-books to support online English learning.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that students find learning English online challenging. The main challenge comes from the psychological aspect. Another challenge is technical issues. These problems cause various problems such as the sudden interruption of lecture time in the middle of a lecture, unclear audio/image during discussions and virtual lectures, etc. It automatically burdens many quotas, and the interactions that occur during the learning process become ineffective.

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