



EFL Learners' Experience of Zoom Platform Use in Online Research Consultation during COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aims to explore EFL learners' experience of Zoom platform use in online research consultation during COVID-19. This study is designed as a case study as the data were gathered from five students' reflection who used Zoom platform as a media for online research consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Framed by usability concept, findings of the study reveal that in terms of learnability, zoom platform facilitates the senior students in their online consultation process. Meanwhile, in terms of satisfaction, the findings reveal that students were satisfied with the use of Zoom due to feature support in the platform. This implies that Zoom platform can be an alternative way to conduct research consultation as it is done by face-to-face consultation. It also can be an option for the lecturers and students even if Covid-19 has ended.

Keywords: *COVID-19; EFL learners; online research consultation; reflection, Zoom platform.*

INTRODUCTION

Using technology in the teaching and learning process is not something new phenomenon in the education field (Lowerison, Sclater, Schmid, & Abrami, 2006). In recent years, recognition of the value of Information Technology (IT) for innovations in teaching and learning in educational subjects has gained ground. This has started since the 21st century (Monica & Fitriawati, 2020). Many programs have sought to improve with new technologies to help the learners' doing online classes and online presentations such as Zoom (Febriyanti & Sundari, 2020). However, unlike many other VoIP technologies, zoom is a collaborative, cloud-based videoconferencing service offering features including online meetings, group messaging services, and secure recording of sessions (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey, & Lawless, 2019).

In addition, the Zoom platform is not popular as an online learning platform that students are familiar with such as *quipper* and *edmodo*, therefore most of the participants are still not familiar with this application when they first use it (Cakrawati, 2017). As an application for group meetings, in Australia, some



researchers use the zoom video conferencing for qualitative data collection (Archibald, et al., 2019). On the other hand, in Chile, the ministry of Education advised schools to deploy remote teaching arrangements wherever possible in order to offer virtual learning opportunities for all children in the country. Due to the increasing number of new COVID-19 cases and the associated school closures, higher education institutions adapted their teaching setting and their practical activities to the virtual environment by using familiar online platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020).

In Indonesia, few researchers examine the use of Zoom as an online learning media and the obstacles students face when engaging in online learning activities (Assapari, 2021). Nevertheless, some online learning is also carried out through video conferencing by utilizing the Zoom Cloud meetings application (Gunawan, Suranti, & Fathoroni, 2020). Most students prefer lectures face to face compared to online learning. Factors that become obstacles in the online learning process are the lack of data packages and sometimes unstable network conditions that cause students to not be able to attend these online classes (Assapari, 2021).

In these unprecedented times, the spread of the COVID-19 has led to profound changes in social interaction and organization, and the education sector has not been immune (Haqien & Rahman, 2020). During this pandemic, many schools and colleges decide to close schools and do online learning processes by utilizing adequate technology for all students (Baron, 2020). During this pandemic period there have been this pandemic period there have been many studies relating to online-based learning processes. Therefore, this study attempted to explore the experience gained by EFL learners' used Zoom platform as a media for online research consultation, especially in the current state of the pandemic. This is important because since 2019, almost all countries have been horrified by the outbreak of a very dangerous virus with a relatively fast transmission rate that made many educational institutions in each country infected with the virus decide to conduct online learning activities. During this pandemic, various online platforms were widely used, especially online platforms based on videoconferencing.

This study focuses on the experience's students while using this online platform and what obstacles students face when using the Zoom platform during the Covid-19 pandemic need to be done so that information related to this can be disclosed through empirical study data/scientific. The results of this study are expected to provide an overview of the experiences of students while participating in online research consultation by using one of the e-learning such as Zoom platform while facing the COVID-19 pandemic to determine its effectiveness to be applied in the classroom.



RESEARCH METHODS

The case study focuses on EFL learners' experience of Zoom platform use in online research consultation during covid-19. In this study, the case study provides a detailed explanation of student experiences when conducting intensive online consultations using Zoom platform. This is in line with Thomas' (2021) argument that the case of study is an in-depth exploration of a single study to a fully contextualized understanding of situation or theme. Case study research builds an in-depth contextual understanding of the case by relying on data sources. This study used qualitative research where the method of content analysis was used to gather the research results. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In analyzing the data, the researcher collected data from a reflection sheet. The reflection sheet consists of six questions. Then the researchers provide reflection sheets to five students who are actively participating in online research project consultations. The students in this case are referred to as PST. After the data was collected, the researcher makes raw data based on the reflection, and then the researcher used thematic coding for analysis.

RESULT

The result of the research showed that learners have positive experience to the implementation of using the Zoom platform in online research consultation. Based on the data that has been analyzed, the experience of students during online consultations using the Zoom platform is divided into two categories related to usability of online platform such as learnability and satisfaction.

The Learnability of Using Zoom Platform in Online Research Consultation

In this study learnability is related to user easiness accessing the application. Learnability refers to the easiness an application or website to use. This convenience is measured by the involvement of the application in supporting the online consultation process as stated in question 1 (Q1) which focuses on student responses about the use of Zoom in online research consultation. The students' experience based on the learnability of Zoom Platform in Q1 is as follows:

“My response is very good. Using Zoom in online research consultation makes it easier for students to consult. It is because zoom is equipped with features such as share screen.” (PTS. 1 of Q1)

As PST 1 argued, the use of Zoom in research consultations is very helpful and makes it easier to consult because of supporting/available features for share screen and feedback in zoom.



“the use of the Zoom application in consulting research projects is quite effective because of the supporting features for screen sharing, video, audio, and flexible because students can still interact face to face as usual even though virtually.” (PTS. 2 of Q1)

As PST 2 argued, the use of the Zoom application in consulting research projects is quite effective because of supporting features for share screen, video, audio and flexible because they can still interact face to face as usual even though this is done virtually.

“In my opinion, the use of zoom in the implementation of the consultation is quite effective because students can show their research papers to the lecturers where the lecturers can correct them directly through the screen share in the zoom application. In addition, students who conduct consultations can also record consultations. It is because zoom has a recorder feature when zoom activities take place.” (PTS. 3 Q1)

As PST 3 argued, the use of the Zoom application in research project consultations is quite effective because of supporting features for sharing screen and recording and flexible because students can show their research papers to lecturers where lecturers can correct/give feedback directly.

Based on the statement, Zoom helps students in online research consultations. With features that support the consultation process such as shared screens, video and audio (audio visual) and recording features during the consultation process. Zoom is also very flexible to use because students do not need to meet face-to-face with lecturers to conduct face-to-face consultations because it has audio-visual features.

Satisfaction of Zoom in Online Research Consultation

Satisfaction relates to user satisfaction after using the application. The level of satisfaction can be measured through responses from participants which include the benefits and weaknesses of the application. From these reflection questions, there are several answers that measure the level of learners' satisfaction with the use of Zoom.

The Advantage of Using Zoom Platform in Online Research Consultation

As an online platform Zoom has advantages. This is referring to question 2 (Q2) and question 4 (Q4) that focused on advantages of using Zoom platform in online research consultation. The learners' experiences based on the satisfaction of Zoom platform Q2 and Q4, typical comments include:



“I feel very happy because this consultation session is very easy and with this online consultation session it is easy for me to understand because I can see directly and listen to the feedback given by the lecturer.” (PTS. 1 of Q2)

As PTS 1 argued, the feeling is he felt very happy because Zoom made it very easy in conducting consultation sessions. By listening directly to the feedback given by the lecturer, she can understand when doing consultation.

“My feelings when doing research consultations online using Zoom are quite exciting. I feel happy and enjoy it. This is because when I consult, I can talk directly with the lecturer and discuss with friends even though it is only online.” (PTS. 2 of Q2)

As PTS 2 argued, her feelings when conducting an online research project consultation session using Zoom were quite exciting because Zoom was flexible when used. Flexibility means that when participants consulted, they could talk directly to the lecturers and discuss with her friends although they are online.

“The benefit that I feel while participating in the research project consultation is I get very clear feedback from the lecturer. It is because during the consultation session, we are really focused on the screen. consultations are also carried out sequentially. so, we can get additional knowledge from the results of our friend's consultation.” (PTS. 2 of Q4)

As PTS 2 argued, the benefit she felt during the online consultation was that he received very clear feedback. It is because during the consultation session, she was really focused on the screen and what was being explained by the lecturer. Consultations are also carried out regularly so that she gains a lot of additional knowledge.

The benefit I get is that student time is more efficient because I am the consul who can be online and can talk to the lecturer and also our papers can be seen and we can change or replace things directed by the lecturer so that we can immediately replace them This can also help me pass the time without having to meet in person on campus. In addition, through consultations like this, I can also see input from lecturers on other student research papers so that I can follow what has been determined and directed by the lecturer regarding errors in my own research project. (PTS. 3 of Q4)

As PTS 3 argued, online consultancy is more efficient. Consul online is very flexible because lecturers can provide feedback without having to meet directly with students.



Based on the students' answers, Zoom has many advantages. The advantages of Zoom platform were based on the answers of students' reflections, such as the consultation process becomes more flexible because students could still consult face to face even though they do not meet directly with lecturers. Besides that, time becomes more efficient, gets feedback directly and students can revise at the same time and students also get additional knowledge from feedback given by lecturer.

Disadvantage of Using Zoom Platform in Online Research Consultation

Besides having some advantages, an online platform Zoom also has disadvantages. This mostly refers to question 3 (Q3) that focuses on constraints of using Zoom platform in online research consultation. The students' experiences based on the satisfaction of Zoom Platform in Q3 as follows:

“The problem that I face is an inadequate network because to access the Zoom application, an adequate internet network is needed.”(PTS.2 of Q3)

As PTS 2 stated that, Disadvantage of using Zoom in online research consultation is inadequate network so that he cannot access zoom.

“The problem I encountered was the network connection. the network is sometimes unstable so that when the lecturer gives feedback, I can't hear the direction and input from the lecturer concerned.”(PTS. 3 of Q3)

As PTS 3 stated that, Disadvantage of using Zoom in online research consultation is a network that is sometimes unstable so that when the lecturer gives feedback, she cannot hear it clearly.

“Bad connection is one of the obstacles in communicating via zoom. When the network is weak, usually the audio is interrupted and unclear and even the connection is lost.” (PTS. 4 of Q3)

As PTS 4 stated that, Disadvantage of using Zoom in online research consultation is unstable internet connection so that the network is weak and the audio is disrupted.

“Inadequate network so that the consultation process did not run smoothly because they could not hear the lecturer's explanation clearly.” (PTS. 5 of Q3)

As PTS 5 stated that, Disadvantage of using Zoom in online research consultation is unstable internet connection so that the consultation process did not run smoothly because they could not hear the lecturer's explanation clearly.



As seen in the students' statement, it showed disadvantage faced by students' during online research consultations that students' need an adequate internet connection to access the Zoom platform and if the internet connection unstable it will have an impact on unclear voice and video so that when the lecturer provide feedback students cannot hear the feedback or information given by the lecturer clearly.

DISCUSSION

This study described the EFL learners' experiences on Zoom platform use in online research consultation. The data were obtained through learners' reflection and divided into two categories related to usability of online platform such as learnability and satisfaction. The result of the research showed that learners have positive experience to the implementation of using the Zoom platform in online research consultation.

Based on the Learnability of Zoom platform used by EFL students in student reflection, this investigation explains that the Zoom platform makes it easier for students to consult online research. For example, with the audio-visual feature that makes it easier for students to see and hear directly the feedback given by the lecturer. In addition, Zoom also has a shared screen feature that makes it easy for students to directly share their research files which would be given feedback by the lecturer. In addition, the Zoom platform also has a recorder feature. This feature serves to record the activities that took place during the consultation via the Zoom platform. This recorder feature has very good benefits where when this feature is activated consultation activities will be recorded and if students are given feedback they forget or do not understand the feedback given by the lecturer, they can re-watch the video consultation that they have recorded. This was in line with Serhan (2020) states that Zoom is a web-based collaborative video conferencing tool that provides quality audio, video, screen sharing, and Zoom meetings can be recorded and made available for future reference.

This research also showed things that satisfy students related to the satisfaction of the Zoom platform is there are many features available in the platform, such as students can directly conduct face to face consultations with lecturers without having to meet in person because Zoom is equipped with features audio visual. It was similar with Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey, and Lawless (2019) which stated that the Zoom platform is a Face-to-Face Conference Platform where Educators and learners' can interact directly as they meet in the class face to face.

Meanwhile, the advantages of Zoom platform are based on the answers of learners' reflections, namely Zoom platform has many features that support the online consultation process. On the other hand, this application is easy to understand how to use. Moreover, consultation using Zoom becomes more efficient and gets learners' feedback directly and students can revise at the same time as well as learners, also get additional knowledge from feedback given by lecturers. This is in line with Serhan



(2020) states that Zoom has features and lecturer can use the different features of Zoom to create interactive learning environments, which include a virtual white board with annotation capacity to explain concepts, breakout rooms to create small collaborative group work, polls for students' feedback, and chat to facilitate class discussions.

Additionally, a disadvantage that students faced during conducting the online research consultation is bad internet connection. The Zoom platform requires a very stable internet connection so that the consultation process can run well. Based on the reflection of students they said when their internet connection was not stable, they could not hear what the lecturer explained clearly. This is in line with Hasan and Khan (2020) states that an unstable connection will result in irregular sound and video so that students cannot listen to the lecturer's explanation clearly. The unstable connection is a significant reason for the disadvantages of web-based learning. For the disadvantages of Zoom platform, it can be concluded that students must have a fast and stable internet connection is required for smooth operation. If the internet connection is low and unstable it will impact the videos can be blurry, audios can be noisy and in the end the students will not get clear information regarding the instructions and feedback given by the lecturer.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is drawn based on the result of the analysis of data. The results showed students had a positive experience of using Zoom platform consulting their research. This study showed that the use of Zoom has learnability and satisfaction. The learnability from the platform includes the platform features. With features that support the consultation process such as shared screens, video and audio (audio visual) and recording features during the consultation process. Zoom is also very flexible to use because students do not need to meet face-to-face with lecturers to conduct face-to-face consultations because it has audio-visual features.

While the satisfaction from this platform is there are many features available in the platform that made the consultation process becomes more flexible because students can still consult face to face even though they do not meet directly with lecturers. Besides that, time becomes more efficient, gets feedback directly and students can revise at the same time. Moreover, students also get additional knowledge from feedback that given by lecturer.

On the other hand, disadvantage faced by students' during online research consultations that students' need an adequate internet connection in order to access the Zoom platform and if the internet connection unstable it will have an impact on unclear voice and video so that when the lecturer provide feedback students cannot hear the feedback or information given by the lecturer clearly.



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