



## EFL Students' Perspective of Learning Speaking via Whatsapp during the Pandemic of Covid-19

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the students' perspective of learning speaking via Whatsapp during the pandemic of covid-19 in intermediate speaking class. A descriptive qualitative method was employed as the design of this study: Six participants were purposefully selected as the research subject of this study. The data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire and semi structured interview. The findings were categorized into four major topics : accessibility, materials or assignment delivery, participation, problems, and challenges. The result showed that most students have a positive perspective on learning speaking via Whatsapp. Even tough the students gave positive responses on the four aspects, but it can be identified that most of the students encounter a problem in availability and sustainability of internet connection.

**Keywords:** *Learning speaking; Whatsapp; Covid-19; Students' perspective.*

### INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has caused the greatest disruption to the education in history UNESCO (2020). The pandemic caused schools, colleges and universities across the globe to close down the activity, shifting forcibly the education system from face to face to distance and virtual modes. This fast change is linked to the shifting of face-to-face teaching to online teaching and learning, the cancellation of physical events and activities and the formation of a 'new normality' in higher education (Tesar, 2020).

In international context Online learning has been viewed as a choice that has the potential of serving a particular group of students that are notably older and bear more familial, financial, and work-related responsibilities compared to on-campus students (Hussein, Daoud, Alrabiah,&Owais, 2020). Online learning is defined as learning carried out from a distance assisted by electronic devices like tablets, smartphones, laptops, and computers which require internet connection (Gonzalez & Louis, 2018). In many cases, the result of emergency online learning was a substantial compromise to the quality of the learning experience (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020).



In the Indonesian context In Indonesia itself, the national disaster management authority of Republic of Indonesia has decided to extend the period of disaster emergency caused by pandemic of COVID-19 until 29 may 2020 (BNPB, 2020). The Minister of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia has instructed schools and colleges to carry out online since 17 march 2020 for COVID-19 affected areas (Mendikbud, 2020b). Soon after that, the minister of education and culture of republic of Indonesia has ordered all education units to run online learning from 24 March 2020 due to increasing spread of COVID-19 and maintaining the health of students, teachers, and all educations staffs (Mendikbud, 2020a). In Muhammadiyah university of Kendari the teaching and learning process has shifted from face to face class into online class since March 2020 due to the pandemic of COVID-19. Based on the interview conducted by the writer to lecturers in Muhammadiyah University of Kendari, most of them used online tools in teaching students such as zoom, google meet, google classroom, Moodle and Whatsapp. In Speaking class, specifically in intermediate speaking, the teacher dominantly used Whatsapp. La Hanisi, Risdiany, Dwi Utami, & Sulisworo (2018) defined that Whatsapp is a smartphone and web-based instant message application that allows users to exchange information using a variety of media including text, image, video, and audio messages.

In connection with speaking course, it has been widely confirmed that speaking is important skill which have to every people learn and mostly taught face to face. But there are little difference way of teaching speaking during the pandemic situation, because students learn speaking subject only via Whatsapp application. Surely there are a challenge for every students have to learn speaking Via Whatsapp such as internet connection, less direct interaction and others. Therefore, having this facts, the researcher was interested to investigate the students' perspective in learning speaking via Whatsapp. This is very important things to know perspective of students because it will give a better understanding on how the teaching speaking could be improved during online teaching.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study used qualitative methods to obtain true data. Based on the problems discussed in this study, this research was included in the type of descriptive research. This aimed to provide symptoms, facts or events related to demographic characteristics in a systematic and accurate manner. This study used qualitative research because the researcher wants to try to describe the students' perspective of learning speaking via Whatsapp and it would identify and presented properly to describe the students' perspective the third semester class A in English department at Muhammadiyah University of Kendari.

This research was conducted at the third semester students of English Department The study was conducted in class A, which consist of 22 students. However, therefore the subjects were only taken purposively into 6 participants. The instrument used to find students' perspective of learning speaking via Whatsapp in this study was a open ended questionnaire and interview. The subject of this study will be gained through purposive sampling. Simply put, the writer decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002).The purpose of the purposive



sampling in this study was to obtain information about students' perspective of learning speaking via Whatsapp at third semester class A.

The writer analyzed the data from questionnaire and interview by using the following two steps adopted from Miles & Hu Berman theory. The first is data reduction. Data reduction means Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing and simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data. The second is data display. The second step is data display. Generally, a view is an organized and compressed collection of information that allows drawing conclusions and actions. The third step in data analysis was drawing conclusions and verification. Conclusion is determined through two phases where initially; the interim data is concluded to support valid evidence of the object of research.

## RESULT

This section provided a brief finding on the research question, which was the students' perception on using Whatsapp in speaking class. The students' perceptions were gathered through the questionnaire and interview. It was found that most of the students showed a various response on four aspects, namely students' **accessibility, materials or assignments delivery, participation and problem and challenge** on using Whatsapp during the speaking class.

### 1. Accessibility

Since the pandemic, all courses were performed in online mode, and they should spend much data to attend the class. So, it is hard to keep them online.

When the researcher asked the question: **How were you connected to the internet during the lesson? Was it easy to be connected ?** the sixth participants answered variously. 4 Participants students (P1, P2, P4, and P6) responded that they easily to be connected in internet, while 2 students (P3 and P5) found hard to connect to internet. Surprisingly, one student said she was easily connected easily sometimes but not as usual. The student (P2) who answered that they easily to be connected to internet because they use a wifi. As the participant 2 said:

*"Since I use wifi in my dorm, it is easy to get into the class".*

Participant P1 and P4 shared similar answers on the question.

*"I am easily connected to internet, but during the Covid-19 I stay in the rural then we know the net connection is not always good so I had to find a network in a good spot so I can connect to my class."*

Participant 6 also said:

*"I am connected to the internet easily."*



However, for students who got difficult to be connected to internet was caused by the location which they lived with no internet connection. As the participant 5 stated that:

*"I am not easy to connect during learning process via online or Whatsapp, because in my village the connection was bad. I should go somewhere to find a good internet connection."*

## **2. The Use of Whatsapp Platform in speaking class (Material and assignment delivery)**

According to students, learning to speak via Whatsapp was a problem for them. This was revealed when the researcher asked the question **To what extent do you like or not learning speaking via online especially via Whatsapp? Why?** 4 students ( P1,P4, P5, P6) responded that they don't really like learning to speak via online or Whatsapp due to less feedback. Surprisingly, one student (P2) said that he doesn't really like learning speaking via Whatsapp but beside that learning speaking via Whatsapp also had benefit cause before he starts to speak in class Whatsapp he can prepare the concept first. Participant 1 said that :

*"I don't like to talk using Whatsapp because I feel difficult and lack of response from the lecturer or friends then make the learning not effective."*

Participant 4 also said :

*"I don't like to talk every online class because I could not focus on the lecture's explanation, but I tried to participate by asking some questions and answered the question from the lecturer even though my response mess out because I know I wouldn't be silent in learning process. Surprisingly, I suddenly be focus when the lecturer suddenly mentions my name to talk something on the learning process because I know I had to talk in English in this subject"*

Participant 5 also said:

*"I really disagree about the online learning or Whatsapp class because several friends were difficult to connect in online learning class like a room zoom, google meet or Whatsapp class group."*

Participant 6 also said:

*"I don't really like learning via Whatsapp because it hard to understand the explanation of the lecturer."*

However, participant 2 preferred learning speaking through Whatsapp because she feels worried if she had to talk face to face. Participant 2 stated in her questionnaire:

*"I sometimes don't like to talk face to face because I feel nervous, but when I talk indirectly, I feel better because I can prepare concept or train my English pronunciation and expression"*



*before speaking. Surely, learning English pronunciation and listening via voice note on Whatsapp for the benefit got in learning speaking via Whatsapp”.*

However, participant 3 found no difficulties both in learning speaking via Whatsapp class or offline class.

*“In my opinion, when learning via Whatsapp it is hard for me cause when I was in the rural it difficult to connect the learning process cause the network was bad. However, learning speaking via online or Whatsapp also bring me easy to do other activities in outdoor”.*

### **3. Students’ Participation**

When the researcher asked the question: **Are you easily involved in the learning process during the online learning?** From the 6 students answered variously. 5 students (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6) answered got easily to involved in learning process during online learning that it’s easy to involve. While one student (P5) said that not easy to involve the learning process cause the net connection was bad. As the participants said below

Participant 1, 2, and 4 shared similar opinions on the question. they said:

*“it’s easy, when the lecturer give notification in group so we can join the class but just sometimes not easy when the internet is bad but overall good.”*

Participant 3 also said :

*“I am easily involved in class because I actively ask questions to students and clarify some materials which I don’t understand yet.”*

Participant 4 also said :

*“yes, it’s easy because when we open our gadgets and activate the class application we are directly connected”*

Participant 6 also said :

*“I was involved if asked something I didn’t understand about the explanation of the lecturer.”*

Surprisingly, one student (P5) said that to be involved in the learning process is not easy. As the participant said

*“It is not easy to get involved in online learning, because I live in remote area with very poor connection, so it makes the learning class become ineffective”*



#### 4. Students' challenge and problems in using Whatsapp in speaking class

When the researcher asked the question: **What are the challenges you find during the speaking class through Whatsapp?** Of the 6 students, 3 students (P1, P2, P6) answered that internet connection is one of the challenges of learning to speak via Whatsapp. As the participants 1, 2 and 6 said in their questionnaire:

*"First is Internet Network is not always good, the second is talking without look the expression from the lecturer and friends so it makes the learning speaking decrease of response of participation of the students". (P1)*

Participant 2 also said :

*"The problem is connection, sometimes it took so long to just upload our voice".*

Participant 6 also said:

*"When I have to practice speaking using a Whatsapp video call our groupmates usually don't listen what we say because their internet connection is bad, so the learning speaking become distracted."*

However, participants 3 and 4 found the cognitive aspect as the challenge in her speaking class.

Participant 3 said:

*"The biggest challenge is the lecturer kept asking me to talk, while it is in Whatsapp."*

Participant 4 said:

*"The challenge I get is that I can't communicate well with friends because in offline class, we can actively participate in some discussion, while on Whatsapp, some friends did not give any response during the discussion".*

Surprisingly, one student (P5) has no challenge during the learning speaking via Whatsapp as the participant said in his questionnaire.

*"So far, I don't feel any problem with learning speaking via Whatsapp"*



## DISCUSSION

This part discusses the finding of the study and will link it with the several relevant theories and previous studies. This study aims to explore How EFL students perceive on learning speaking via Whatsapp during the pandemic of Covid-19. Based on the finding, it was found that the students have various perspective among four aspects, namely students' **accessibility, materials or assignments delivery, Student's participation and problem and challenge** on using Whatsapp during the speaking class.

Students' accessibility to join speaking class through Whatsapp. The finding shows that the sixth participants response variously. Most of the participants struggled to connect to the internet because they live in a region. Because of its inadequate infrastructure and governmental services, such situations were typical in the least-developed region. (Agung, 2019). According to the finding, mostly the participants response that they got easily to understand the materials or assignment who provided by the lecturer during the class because during the learning process, they use additional sources such as browsing on internet and asking friend for some help. However, several students found it hard to understand the materials or assignment via Whatsapp because the explanation was presented through voice note in their speaking class group. Cheung et al (2008) in Amry (2014) state that students' engagement through mobile technologies influences their motivations for social interactions.

Revealing the result of students' participation, the data shows most of the students were actively involved in online learning. However, it did not mean that they easily to get involved in learning since the internet connection was a problem in their learning. Limited infrastructures in the villages such as lack of internet connection forced students to travel and hike some hills out of their villages just to get hold of internet signal. Network interaction can also present considerable challenges to both teachers and students (Peyton in Egbert & Smith, 1999).

Regarding the students' challenge and problems during the learning speaking via Whatsapp, mostly the students dealt with the technical problems such as assignment due date and internet connection. Therefore, the students gave suggestions for learning to be more effective by means of the teacher present the student more videos for and actively involve the students in learning. Nguyen (2015) asserted that many researchers and educators were interested in online learning to improve student learning outcomes, considering online learning to be more effective than traditional face-to- face format.

## CONCLUSION

This research was aimed to explore the students' perspective on using Whatsapp in speaking class. Based on students' responses on open-ended questionnaire and further confirmation through interview, the researcher concluded that mostly students have a positive perspective on



learning speaking via Whatsapp. Even though the students gave positive responses on the four aspects investigated (accessibility, materials delivery and assignment, students' participation and problem and challenges), but it can be identified that most of the students encounter a problem in availability and sustainability of internet connection.

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