

EFL Higher Students' Experiences in Apps-based Learning for Virtual Presentation

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ABSTRACT

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As the Indonesian government and most countries forbade traditional face-to-face teaching and learning in the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual teaching and learning through some apps have increased significantly, and one among them is Zoom. This qualitative research with a case study approach aims to explore EFL higher students' experiences in App-based learning specifically for virtual presentation. Six students participated in this research, and the researchers got through purposive sampling. The open-ended interview was the primary data collection used in this research to give a clear picture and deep understanding of EFL higher students' experience through App-based learning for virtual presentation. All the interview data were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and divided into some themes. Further, member checking was done by the researchers to develop the high trustworthiness of the research. This research revealed at least two themes: advantages (free from space-time and increasing speaking ability) and disadvantages (costly and lousy connection). Further, suggestions and recommendations were offered to all related parties.

Keywords

App-Based Learning

COVID-19

Experiences

Virtual Presentation

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Introduction

The emergence of the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 has rapidly spread around China and many other countries in the world [1]-[3]. This situation has driven the world into a new way of living. It is mainly because many cities across the globe were quarantined by their government to stop the rapid spread of coronavirus, which threatens human lives worldwide. European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that there were at least 71.333 cases were identified as positively exposed to coronavirus around the globe on February 17, 2020, and the number of deaths among those was 1.775. Those numbers are still significantly increasing, which drives the World Health Organization (WHO) to announce the disease has become a new epidemic [4].

In Indonesia, a novel coronavirus was first confirmed to spread out on March 2, 2020, and the number of patients that the virus has positively infected is still growing significantly daily. As of today, July 21, 2020, the Indonesian government has confirmed that the virus infected at least 89.869 patients, and among those, 4.320 patients have already passed away (<https://www.detik.com/tag/virus-corona>). Therefore, through all their ministries, the Indonesian government has agreed to do all activities from home, such as working and studying. In education, the Indonesian Ministry of Education requested all their teachers and lecturers to teach from their own houses since teaching and learning processes in public spaces (schools and universities) were not yet allowed. Thus, all educators should integrate their teaching and learning process with modern technology through online or e-learning using either applications or websites.

The purpose of integrating technology in teaching and learning was mainly because technology has made learning accessible to everyone almost anywhere in the world by enabling individuals to engage in a more independent way of learning [5]. The integration of technology in online education was not a new thing in the 21st era. Therefore, many studies have been conducted to determine their effectiveness (advantages and disadvantages) when taking into account the teaching and learning process [6]-[13]. To mention a few, a mixed-method study conducted by Ref. [6] trying to create the atmosphere of a digital writing classroom through portable computing devices and tablets to engage their coursework found positive findings. The study revealed that the tablet initiative generated writing-intensive, student-centered, and new classroom experiences.

Ref has also conducted another study in the context of online learning. [7] who investigated English students' perceptions of using WhatsApp in a paragraph writing class in a public university within the qualitative inquiry. The study revealed positive perceptions

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among the students as there were many beneficial things in integrating WhatsApp in paragraph writing class, such as independence from time and location, perceived progress of vocabulary, and grammatical improvement. Further, Ref. [13] also conducted a study in the context of online learning to investigate the effectiveness of mobile learning apps in higher education in India. They revealed that mobile learning apps can be handy in higher education since the students have adequate knowledge and awareness to use mobile technology and the Internet in their educational environment.

Although many researchers have massively conducted studies related to online learning in the past few years, there were still limited studies published in the context of Indonesian EFL higher students that discussed the effectiveness of App-based teaching and learning through Zoom Applications for virtual meetings during the COVID-19 attacks. Analyzing the efficacy of Zoom as App-based learning is undauntedly meaningful since smartphone applications (so-called 'apps') in learning and teaching languages have brought with them new opportunities as well as challenges that will have an impact on learning and teaching methodology for decades to come [14],[15]. Therefore, the current research aims to explore and analyze the effectiveness of the Zoom Application for virtual presentation among Indonesian EFL higher students to enrich and broaden research horizons in the context of Indonesian English teaching and learning process.

Literature Review

A. Virtual Presentation

Dealing with virtual presentation, Ref. [16] stated that a virtual presentation is delivered live from a desktop or laptop computer to an audience anywhere in the world with Internet access. Therefore, the presenter could see audiences at remote locations during the simulated presentation, and the audience could see the presenter from a learning distance. Presenting online offers new challenges for students as fewer visual cues and increased technological expertise are required [16]. In today's era, the most widely used technologies for delivering virtual presentations are apps-based learning, Network Sites, wikis, and virtual worlds [17]. As Ref. [18] claims, mobile applications that promote learning are highly advantageous for students. This encourages a self-paced learning environment where students can learn where they want and at any time. Many applications, such as the Zoom app, Google Classroom, and Google Docs, are built to support today's learning as a technology resource. Thus, in this field, the researchers focus on integrating technology in classrooms by using the Zoom application for virtual presentations.

B. Advantages and Disadvantages of Technology in English Classroom

The use of technology in the learning process has become the main concern for all educational components [19], which is considered a crucial factor in improving the quality of

education. The main impact of ICT in education can be seen in improving the capabilities of instructors, changing the educational structure, creating opportunities for more significant and comprehensive learning, enhancing academic quality, and improving teaching skills [20]. Interestingly, the other study reported that students preferred using mobile devices as technology-supported educational tools because they are more accessible, more portable, and newer technology [21]. Mobile devices have transformed how people communicate, access, and give information [22]. Further, the growing accessibility and sophistication of educational technologies open up increasing possibilities for students to explore, share, and create content [23]. In addition, Ref. [24]-[26] stated some advantages of the integration of technology, such as independence from time and location, vocabulary acquisition, offering the possibility to evaluate students' performance, improving grammar, quality improvement, and educational efficiency, and creating an interactive community for discussion.

However, some disadvantages exist when lecturers integrate technology into teaching and learning activities, such as time management issues, students' lack of ICT skills, and limited technical infrastructure in some higher learning institutions [7],[27]. Further, studies support that e-learning possesses some disadvantages [28]. The disadvantages of e-learning that studies have given include the following: e-learning as a method of education makes the learners undergo contemplation, remoteness, as well a lack of interaction or relation; concerning clarifications, the offer of explanations, as well as interpretations, the e-learning method might be less effective than the traditional method of learning; when it comes to improvement in communication skills of learners, e-learning as a method might have a negative effect; since tests for assessments in e-learning are possibly done with the use of proxy, it will be difficult, if not impossible to control or regulate destructive activities like cheating. E-learning may also be misled to piracy and plagiarism, predisposed to inadequate selection skills and the ease of copying and pasting. Also, not all fields or disciplines can employ e-learning in education. For instance, the purely scientific fields that include practical cannot be adequately studied through e-learning.

C. Coronavirus and Pandemic

From 2019 to 2020, the coronavirus pandemic impacted educational systems worldwide, substantially closing schools, universities, and colleges. According to the latest figures released by UNESCO, some 1.3 billion learners worldwide could not attend school or university as of March 23, 2020. As of 13 April 2020, approximately 1.725 billion learners have been affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. According to UNESCO monitoring, 192 countries have implemented nationwide closures, and five have implemented local closures, impacting about 99.9 percent of the world's student population. Efforts to stem the spread of

COVID-19 through non-pharmaceutical interventions and preventive measures such as social distancing and self-isolation have prompted the widespread closure of primary, secondary, and tertiary schooling in over 100 countries [29].

Several Governments in Indonesia have initiated distance learning programs to enable students to pursue their home studies to tackle this problem. At this stage, preparedness, transparency, and information sharing are crucial to risk assessments and beginning outbreak control activities [30],[31]. There are some strategies to manage systems in the educational field. Therefore, educators and students should use applications or websites to integrate the teaching and learning process. This can be achieved using mobile devices, such as personal digital assistants (PDAs), cell phones, smartphones, and tablet computers [32]. This was mainly because technology allowed learning to be made available to almost everyone in the world by enabling people to participate in a more independent learning method that incorporated technology in teaching and learning [33]. Furthermore, the suggestion was made to use interactive teaching tools in English (e.g., videos and websites) so that students use English at their speed and learn individually, both in and after class. Therefore, teachers and students must foster teaching and learning processes based on technology.

Methods

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers collected safe data to create comfortable conditions for participants and researchers. Hence, the researchers made the applicable criteria based on the government's regulations about preventing the COVID-19 pandemic, such as not having direct contact, touching, or being with crowds of people. Thus, this study was conducted on the student's case study because the COVID-19 era requires university students from one of the private universities in Yogyakarta city to use the Zoom application as one of the apps-based learning for virtual presentation.

A. Sample and Data Collection

The researchers employed the qualitative method to collect the data from multiple sources and gain precise information about EFL higher students' experiences in apps-based learning for virtual presentation to avoid COVID-19. Furthermore, individual semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection instruments to gather the data. As this was an exploratory study, a personal semi-structured interview was used as a prominent instrument. Those techniques made the information on students' experiences toward apps-based learning more precise. The participants were six students selected as the sample of the study. They came from the English department, faculty of graduate studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, in the academic year 2020/2021. The samples were selected by purposive sampling (a non-random sampling), which mandates that the samples' selection refers to a specific time, place, group, community, and person. The researchers avoided sample selection by using random sampling.

In this study, apps-based learning was experienced by students in some courses because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the precise information could be gained in this case study. In addition, to increase the trustworthiness of the research, the researchers did member checking to make sure what the participants said was right.

To explore the phases of the data collection, the researchers, in the first phase, took the students' experiences through an online individual interview during the Non-natural disaster emergency response period determined by the National Disaster Management Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (April-May, 2020). At the moment, the university policy has forbidden campus instructional meetings, which have been changed to the online classroom until the end of the emergency period. All interviews were recorded with the student's permission; recordings were then transcribed for analysis and divided into some themes and subthemes.

B. Data Analysis

Given that the key aim of the study was to reveal the EFL students' experiences and given the qualitative, it was deemed that the thematic analysis technique was the best to run the study. Afterward, the thematic codes were decided for the replies to each question, with sometimes multiple codes being given to replies. Furthermore, the replies were arranged and inspected for fixes or overlaps before the interviews were reviewed with these codes in mind to see if any further data revealed themselves. Then, any new codes that appeared were noted and studied in the same treatment, and these made up the themes. Thus, this technique was correlated with the concept of Ref. [34].

Results and Discussion

Six participants in this research are labeled OS1, OS2, OS3, OS4, OS5, and OS6 to respect the participants' privacy. Based on the interview section, it focuses on one central question: What are Indonesian EFL higher students' perceptions of the Zoom application as an app-based learning for virtual meetings during the COVID-19 attacks? The researchers got two significant themes from that question as follows:

Table 1. Themes and Subthemes

No	Themes	Subthemes
1	Advantages	Independent from space and time Increasing speaking ability
2	Disadvantages	Costly Bad internet connection

A. Advantages: Free from space-time and increasing speaking ability

In this theme, our participants explored their perception of their experiences associated with using Zoom as an app-based learning tool for virtual presentations. Based on the interview sections, most participants agreed that having app-based learning through Zoom for virtual presentations was enjoyable as it provides them with free space and time for learning so that they can manage their activity freely without worrying about their classes.

... Initially, it was not easy to get accustomed to new learning methods through Zoom, but later, I found it easy since I could manage my time more freely. (OS 1)

COVID-19, of course, has harmful effects, but on the other hand, because of it, I can do my studies in my hometown, which is nice. (OS 2)

The data above indicated that a virtual presentation was a new experience for the participants, as they admitted they were not accustomed to it yet. However, later on, the participants found it interesting to do the teaching and learning process by the virtual presentation. With the integration of technology, the participants could manage their time freely and even return to their hometown as technology could be accessed everywhere (accessible and portable). These data were congruent with the previous research [7],[21],[22],[35]-[37], which revealed that the integration of technology makes the students manage their own time and space. In addition, most participants disclosed exciting data and agreed that having virtual presentations as the medium of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic increases their speaking skills.

As we need to do a lot of presentations through Zoom in almost every meeting, we need to do a lot of preparation so that all the participants can understand the virtual presentation. (OS 4)

...I agree that my speaking skills have increased significantly among the other skills since we only speak and speak through Zoom. (OS 6)

From the data above, the participants could not deny that among four primary English skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking skills became the most significant skill, which increased. This is mainly because their virtual presentation task mostly only says to explain their material to the whole class. However, the participants hope that the lecturer could be more creative in mixing the lesson through virtual learning so that not only speaking skills but also all the significant skills of English could increase.

... It would be better if our lecturer could mix the tasks which involve other English skills. (OS 3)

B. Disadvantages: Costly and Bad Connection.

One could hardly deny that advantages and disadvantages will always come in pairs. Even though all the participants agreed on some benefits of having virtual presentations through app-based learning, there were still some disadvantages. In this research, one among many consistent data emerges from the participants, who revealed that having a virtual presentation

was too costly and eventually had trouble with the internet connection. This data was also congruent with previous studies, which showed that the integration of technology cost the students much and had limited infrastructure [7],[25],[26],[33].

...but this kind of activity makes my internet quota run out quickly, and you know I need to buy more and more. Otherwise, I will be counted as absent from the class. (OS 5)

I did not come back to my hometown because I have some work here, but due to COVID-19, my salary was cut off; meanwhile, I need to buy the internet quota. (OS 2)

Not surprisingly, the virtual presentation needs many internet quotas as it is an internet-based meeting with a video call. Furthermore, as stated by the data above, some of our participants could not return to their hometowns as they have an obligation in their workplace with only half-salary paid to them because of COVID-19. This situation drives some participants to look for another job to fulfill their daily needs and buy large, expensive quality quotas.

... therefore, I need a double job to fulfill all my stuff and, of course, the internet quota. (OS 4)

Fortunately, one participant stated that their university gave some “discount” on their tuition fee during COVID-19. The money could be used to buy essential stuff for studying at home, such as a quota to keep the teaching and learning process active.

My university seemed concerned about my situation, so they cut off some tuition fees so I could buy an expensive, high-quality quota. (OS 3)

Not only having problems with the money, our participants also experienced, on some occasions, unstable or lousy internet connection even though they had already bought a high-quality provider. Based on their experience, it mainly happens when the weather is not good, such as when there is lightning, heavy rain, and other things.

Sometimes, I still do not understand why my internet was unstable on a friendly afternoon, but sometimes, it is because of bad weather. (OS 1)

Finally, the findings of this research indicate that integrating technology in EFL classrooms has advantages and disadvantages. An advantages revealed from previous research [7],[21],[22],[25],[26] was congruent with this research. That benefit is free from space-time. It is because modern technology, such as smartphones and laptops, is portable, can be brought everywhere, and can be used at any time. However, one interesting finding from using App-based learning revealed from this research is increasing speaking skills. This is mainly because our participants, EFL higher students, only use the virtual presentation application. Hence, they need a lot of preparation to speak and explain their materials to the class. However, our participants also could not deny that they hoped the lecturer would be more creative in giving the tasks that involved other English skills so that all four English skills could be improved. In

addition, all the participants reported that having a virtual presentation in app-based learning was their first experience. Further, most participants cannot deny that having an online class through virtual presentation was an amazing experience due to its advantages. Therefore, the result of the current research gives clear evidence that integrating technology in EFL classrooms can give some educational value when used in an educational environment in higher education.

The disadvantages were at least two relevant to the previous research [7],[27] which are technical infrastructure (lousy internet connection) and cost to use. Regarding those problems, our participants have already prepared an expensive quality provider to minimize them. Further, another disadvantage is that it is costly; our participants admit that they got some tuition fees cut from their universities as their concern to the students to help them buy an expensive, high-quality provider. Therefore, it could be indicated that our participants could manage the problems they faced well.

Conclusion

Finally, this research has given a detailed explanation and clear picture of EFL higher students' experiences in App-based learning for virtual presentation via Zoom. From the data of this research, it could be included that integrating technology potentially provides EFL higher students significant advantages, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the findings, the popularity of modern technology should be well utilized by lecturers not only during the COVID-19 pandemic but also later on after this pandemic is gone. Therefore, technology could be used positively in the educational field. Finally, the current research findings could help educational practitioners decide whether to implement apps-based learning for the teaching and learning process.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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