CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS

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Abstract: *The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on various fields, including the education sector. As an effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19 is learning from home. Online learning is the main alternative to implementing learning from home. This study aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This type of research is qualitative with a descriptive approach. The research subjects are students of English education level I-III. Data collection techniques using interviews and observation. The results of the study indicate that there are challenges and opportunities in online learning carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are limited internet access, students' understanding of the material delivered through online learning, decreased student motivation and learning activity, and students or lecturers are not fully ready with the implementation of online learning. And the opportunities of online learning are flexible, online learning can increase learning independence, and online learning can increase student knowledge about technology.*

Keyword: *Challenge, Opportunity, Online Learning, Covid-19 Pandemic*

Abstrak: *Munculnya pandemi Covid-19 memberikan dampak terhadap berbagai bidang termasuk bidang pendidikan. Sebagai upaya untuk mencegah penyebaran Covid-19 adalah belajar dari rumah. Pembelajaran online merupakan alternatif utama untuk menerapkan pembelajaran dari rumah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki tantangan dan peluang dari pembelajaran online selama masa pandemi Covid-19. Jenis penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Subjek penelitian adalah mahasiswa pendidikan bahasa inggris tingkat I-III. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara dan observasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat tantangan dan peluang dalam pembelajaran online yang dilakukan selama masa pandemi Covid-19. Tantangannya adalah keterbatasan akses internet, pemahaman mahasiswa terhadap materi yang disampaikan melalui pembelajaran online, penurunan motivasi dan keaktifan belajar, dan mahasiswa dan dosen belum siap sepenuhnya dengan pelaksanaan pembelajaran online. Dan peluangnya adalah pembelajaran online fleksibel, pembelajaran online dapat meningkatkan kemandirian belajar, dan pembelajaran online dapat meningkatkan pengetahuan mahasiswa mengenai teknologi.*

Kata kunci: *Tantangan, Peluang, Pembelajaran Online, Pandemi Covid-19*

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 stands for coronavirus disease and even referred to as the 2019 novel coronavirus or '2019-nCoV' (Bender, 2020). According to Huang et al. (2020), a novel corona virus, known as Covid-19, was discovered in the last month of the year 2019, in a seafood market in Wuhan. Clinical analysis results of the virus showed person-to-person transmission (Li et al., 2020; Paules et al., 2020; Wang, Cheng, et al., 2020). The Director General of WHO in March 2020 (WHO, 2020) declared Covid-19 as a pandemic after assessment of the rapid spread and severity of the deadly virus across the globe with additional announcement of social distancing as a means of curbing the spread of the pandemic.

Covid-19 has been bringing drastic changes in people's lives worldwide. Including in Indonesia, Covid-19 has had an impact on various fields including education. Due to this pandemic, it is estimated that more than a billion students cannot receive lessons from their onsite schools or universities (Mondol & Mohiuddin, 2020). Therefore, in an effort to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus and to keep education running despite the pandemic, the government has issued a policy to study from home at various levels of education. Many schools and colleges implement learning at home by doing online learning.

Online Learning is an open and distributed learning system using pedagogical tools (educational aids), made possible through the internet and network-based technology to facilitate the formation of learning and knowledge processes through meaningful actions and interactions (Dabbagh and Ritland:2005:15). Previous studies have suggested that e-learning is focused on the students' understanding of collaborative work such as how to build meaning, how to negotiate together and how to understand each other (support) in a learning process that is conducted at a distance (Friedman & Friedman, 2020). Through the benefits of social media and various platforms, students and teachers have the opportunity to optimize the learning process. However, online learning is not a common learning system in Indonesia. Because so far learning is usually done in a room/class or commonly called face-to-face learning. So online learning may be a new learning where teachers and students are not familiar with the learning system implemented during this pandemic.

In this case, of course, online learning has challenges and opportunities when implementing it, where during these pandemic students are required to start interacting using technology. Many students, especially students who live in complaint areas, when the implementation of online learning is constrained by networks, quotas, and others. As for learning challenges according to (Sadikin and Hamidah, 2020) stated that the weakness of online learning is that students are not well monitored during the learning process, weak internet signal and the high cost of internet quota. Almost the same as stated by (Jamaluddin et. Al., 2020) that there were three learning constraints online, namely limited student quota, unstable internet network, and student assignments that pile up.

In addition, online learning also has an impact on lecturers and students, namely improving technology in learning and increasing student learning independence. Kuo et al., (2014) states that online learning is more student-centered causing them to be able to generate responsibility and autonomy within learning (learning autonomy). Studying online is demanding of students prepare their own learning, evaluate, organize and organize simultaneously maintaining motivation in learning (Sun, 2014; Aina, M.,2016).

The change in conventional learning systems to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, requires lecturers and students to have the skills to use laptops or smartphones in utilizing existing educational technology. Previously, lecturers taught their students face-to-face using a projector,

now they have to switch to using other learning media that are in accordance with the context of online learning. Lecturers must be able to use various Learning Management Systems (LMS) to deliver material to students. Learning Management System or abbreviated as LMS according to Ellis (2009: 1) is a software for administrative purposes, documentation, reports on activities, teaching and learning activities and online activities, e-learning and training materials, all of which are carried out online. Likewise, students, who previously were only passive learners who only received information and knowledge from lecturers, are now required to study independently, and be able to use their smartphones for learning purposes, such as being able to communicate with lecturers by utilizing technology or applications and being able to send assignments automatically (online).

But besides these challenges, of course there are also opportunities for the use of information technology that lecturers need to develop innovatively and of course will be very useful in the world of learning and the digital era. The digital transformation of the education sector in Indonesia is not a new discourse, various discussions, supporting regulations and concrete efforts to implement digital transformation in universities and all school levels in Indonesia. Although various discourses such as the socialization of the industrial era 4.0 have not succeeded in making the education industry achieve significant progress in the digital transformation of Indonesian education, Covid-19 has had a tremendous impact in this aspect (Suteki, 2020). In terms of various aspects, Covid-19 has had a negative impact on various sectors of human life. However, Covid-19 has also had various positive impacts, including in the field of education. Covid-19 has triggered the acceleration of the digital transformation of Indonesian education.

Online learning is also carried out for students of English education study programs at a teacher training institute in East Java. The application of online learning needs to be seen from the student's point of view to find out student experiences in online learning. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities of online learning experienced by pre-service English teachers in a teacher training and education institute in East Java during pandemic COVID-19.

RESEARCH METHOD

This type of research is a descriptive qualitative approach. This study aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities of online learning experienced by pre-service English teachers in a teacher training and education institute in East Java during pandemic COVID-19. According to Moleong (2005: 6), qualitative research is research that aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others holistically, and through descriptions in the form of words and language, in special contexts. natural and by using various natural methods.

Data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observations, and documentation. The data sources of this research came from students of English education and lecturers who teach using e-learning at levels I-III. Data analysis used 3 analytical techniques from Miles and Hubberman (1984 21-23), namely firstly reducing data related to research problems, student experiences when using online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data are disaggregated according to research needs. Second, data presentation, where the researcher presents the data that has been processed. And finally, verification (deduction), where the researcher draws conclusions from the results of research on the challenges and opportunities in online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

In an effort to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus, schools and universities implement online learning or learning that can be done at home to avoid crowds. Of course, this learning is different from previous learning where lecturers and students carry out the teaching and learning process on campus. However, so that learning continues to run to continue education and to replace conventional learning, learning is carried out through online learning. As the results of the interview reflected in some interview excerpts below.

Student perceptions of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic have a very important role in determining the success of the learning objectives implemented. In this study, it was found that online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was less effective for English language education students at a private teacher training institute in East Java.
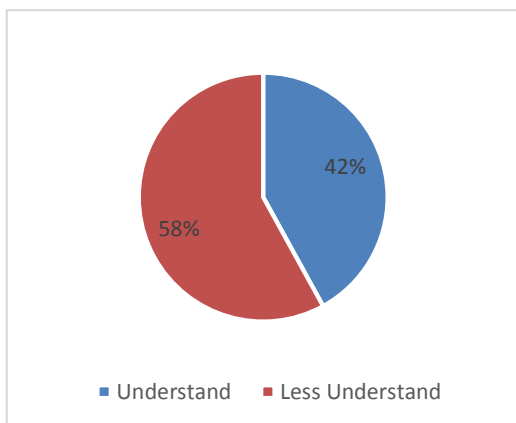

Figure 1. The Effectiveness of Online Learning

From the figure above shows that 83% of students think that online learning is less effective. This is due to several factors that cause online learning to be less effective or not optimal. As signal problem, less supportive devices, and lack of learning interaction.

There were some online platforms used by the lecturers such as Google Meet, Zoom, Google Classroom, Moodle and Whatsapp. According to the interviews result conducted among RRR, FN, & MRT, Google Meet had been the most favourable online platform among those three lecturers. However, from time to time, Zoom was more favourable because it was applicable and representative than Google Meet.

The benefit of e-learning method is that it can make the learning system more flexible. Lecturers can easily share materials with students trought e-learning platform. In addition, online learning is also easy to use and can save transportation cost. Because with online learning/distance learning, students do not need to go to campus to follow the learning. Through online learning, students can access material easily, and can be done anywhere and anytime.

Through online learning during a pandemic, students can study as usual and will not miss lecture material. However, this online learning was not fully welcomed by the students. In this study it was found that the level of student understanding decreased.
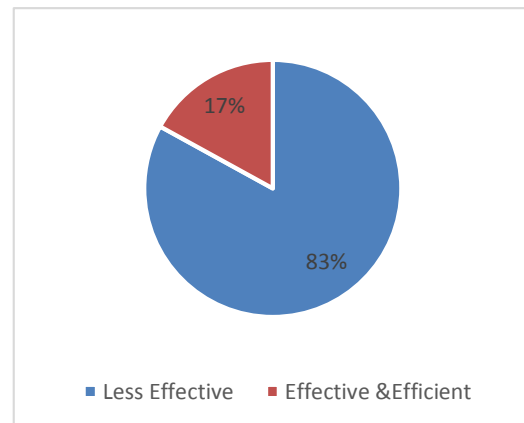

Figure 2. Student Undergraduate

From the picture above, it shows that only 42% of students understand, while 58% of students do not understand the material delivered through online learning. Students misunderstanding of the material delivered through online learning is caused by several factors such as network problem, nothing explanation from the lecturer regarding the material, and some students not focus with learning because disturbed with their

activity in house. In this case, student understanding determines student learning success. If the students understanding decreases, the learning is called unsuccessful or has not been able to achieve the goals of efficient learning.

Online learning is learning that uses the help of online learning platform media. However, online learning is a new learning carried out by several schools or education in Indonesia, so not many know beforehand about online media platforms. In this study, it was found that students had no difficulties when using the e-learning platform. because the e-learning platform is considered easy to use, but some students said that they find it difficult when fisrt use e-learning platform.

One of the advantages of online learning is that it is easy to access and use by anyone, but online learning also has several obstacles experienced by students of English education study programs. The obstcles of online learning for english education students include student lazy and sleepy when the online learning process, network/signal problems, quotas, devices, and time.

In addition, the results of observation are also found some obstacles when the online learning process. First, the level of student participation is low when learning online. This is evidenced when online learning through the zoom platform, student attendance is only 50-70% of the total number of students at level I. In addition, student participation on the Moodle platform also differs from previous student participation with F2F learning. Based on the result of interview with lecturer, the problem of student participation is due to students who are not serious in participating in the online learning process or only attending as a formality. In addition, student participation has decreased compared to online learning. Where there are students who do not follow the learning process completely. Second, students tend to be passive when learning online. This is evidenced by the lack of feedback given by students during the online learning process,

whether it's using the Zoom platform, Google Classroom or Moodle, students tend to be passive and silent. Third, students had difficulty understanding the material delivered through online learning. Based on observations, lecturers of several courses during online learning only provide ppt/material files along with assignments without any discussion of the content of the material, except for courses that use the zoom platform, so that some students during interviews considered this to sometimes make it difficult for them to understand the material. And the last, students had problems using the Moodle platform, where students were unable to submit assignments and the attendance link that had been filled in. This of course can cause learning problems.

Of the various obstacles experienced by students of English education study programs, in this study also found the advantages of online learning. The advantages of online learning according to student of English education is online learning can be done anytime and anywhere, and with online learning students feel free and relaxed.

And based on the observation, found some advantages/opportunities in online learning, including online learning can make students more independent and can increase knowledge about technology. Online learning can make students more independent, because students are required to understand the material themselves by downloading the material that has been distributed by the lecturer. Some lecturers just distribute the material without being given an explanation. So that this can be an opportunity for students to learn independently without relying on lecturers. In addition, online learning can make students understand many new applications for online learning, such as zoom, goggle classroom, moodle and so on. In this day and age, technological advances are increasingly developing, utilizing technology is a must for now in order to be able to continue learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be an opportunity for students to

continue to improve their knowledge of technology.

To support the online learning process, stakeholders provide the facilities and infrastructure on learners, including students of English education at a teacher training institute in east java also get it. In this study, it was found that some students had received free internet quota subsidies from the government, but some did not. In addition, the campus provides a reduction in tuition payments of 50 thousand, which can be used to buy internet quota.

B. Discussion

This study focuses on the experiences of students of English education level I-III in online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at a private teacher institute in East Java. From the research results, the teaching and learning process has a significant difference, where online learning is very different from conventional learning/F2F learning that was carried out before the pandemic. There are several challenges and opportunities that arise in the implementation of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Challenges of Online Learning

a. The limitations of the internet network

In this case, the biggest challenge experienced by students is a signal that is less supportive or unstable. This is because there are many students from private teacher institutes in East Java whose houses are located on the outskirts of the city. This is in line with Yunus, M., Setiawan, DF, & Wuryandini, E. (2020) who stated "The obstacles to the implementation of online learning include the unstable internet network signal, this is because some students are at home which is still relatively rural with internet network facilities that have not been maximized."

b. Students' understanding of the material delivered through online learning

Another challenge experienced by students of English education is understanding the material. Based on the findings, the delivery of material during online learning is difficult for students to capture due to several factors, such as when the online learning process suddenly disconnects, the lecturer only distributes materials and assignments on the e-learning platform without any discussion or explanation. While each student has a different level of understanding, some students may be able to catch material more quickly just by reading, but there are also those who need a longer time to understand a material. This is in line with Andini N.F. (2020) which states "Most students do not fully accept the online learning system because most students do not understand the material provided by the lecturer. Especially if you don't explain before giving the assignment."

c. Decreased student motivation and learning activity

An unstable network and weak student understanding of the material delivered through online learning can lead to frustration in learning. So that student learning motivation can decrease due to several factors as above. While motivation is very important in teaching and learning activities, because motivation can encourage the spirit of learning. According to Hasibuan (2001: 1441) motivation is needed in human activities, because motivation is something that can cause, channel, and support human behavior to do something with enthusiasm and enthusiasm to achieve optimal results. teaching where students are required to be active in learning activities. These two things can be said to be related because if students do not have the motivation to learn, there will be no active learning. Based on the findings, there was a decrease in motivation and active learning in English education study study students in using online learning during the pandemic.

d. Students or lecturers are not ready for online learning

The application of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic requires the readiness of various parties. However, the many challenges in online learning that are carried out on students of English education level I-III, the authors can conclude that both students and lecturers are not fully ready to implement online learning. Unpreparedness for the implementation of online learning is caused by the different backgrounds of students such as differences in network strength in each region, availability of quotas, and students' ability to understand the material, students' motivation to learn in online learning, technical problems and so on. This is in line with Astini (2020), there is a change in the learning paradigm, students complain a lot, as evidence of student unpreparedness internally related to values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills in obtaining, evaluating, and organizing information.

2. Opportunities of Online Learning

a. Online Learning is Flexible

During this pandemic, learning has turned to online or e-learning methods. Online learning is considered to be an alternative for a more flexible learning process. Where with online learning teachers and students can carry out the teaching and learning process at home and not bound by space and time. Or it can be said that online learning can be done anytime and anywhere. In this study, it was found that on the zoom platform students can play back the teaching and learning process if they fall behind in learning. And on other platforms such as Google Classroom and Moodle, students can access materials easily. So that online learning is practical in terms of time and cost efficiency, because students can adjust their study time and without having to go to their campus. According to Hartono (2017), the advantage of using e-learning is that it is fast and credible for the delivery of material, can be done anytime and anywhere, where learning can be accessed from any location and is global and without any time limits, students can access 24 hours a day.

b. Online Learning can increase student learning independence

One of the effects of online learning is that students are required to be more independent in understanding the material being taught. And students must be more active compared to conventional learning, where in previous learning/face-to-face learning, lecturers have more roles such as preparing material and explaining it. In this study, it was found that in online learning some lecturers only distributed material without any explanation. Therefore, students must understand the material that has been shared and look for additional learning material references from various sources such as the internet or others. According to *Oknisih, N., & Suyoto, S., (2019)*, The advantage of online learning is an increase in learning independence, interest and motivation, courage expressing ideas and questions. So that these advantages/opportunities can be used by students to practice their independent learning.

c. Online Learning can increase knowledge of students about technology

The Covid-19 pandemic has demanded students to be ready to do online learning and self-study. It also requires teachers or students to understand technology. Because online learning is learning that uses internet technology in the delivery of learning (Rosenberg, 2012: 28). In this case, online learning can provide opportunities for lecturers or students to develop their skills in mastering and understanding technological advances. According to Puspitorini, F. (2019), with the Learning from Home policy, it is able to force and accelerate them to master digital learning technology as a necessity. The demands of these needs make them able to find out online media that can support as a substitute for direct classroom learning, without reducing the quality of learning materials and achievement targets in learning.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused changes in all aspects of life, including in the field of education in Indonesia. The enactment of the government's policy to study from home requires students to be able to adapt to the online learning process. Where online learning is learning that uses the internet network so that teaching and learning activities continue to work. Based on the experience of level I-III English education students at a teacher training institute in East Java regarding online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, there are challenges and opportunities. The challenges of online learning for English education students during the COVID-19 pandemic include 1) the limitations of internet network, 2) students' understanding of the material delivered through online learning, 3) decreased student motivation and learning activity, and 4) students or lecturers are not fully ready with the implementation of online learning. Online learning opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic that can be put to good use by students include online learning is flexible, 2) online learning can train students' independent learning, and 3) online learning can increase students' knowledge of technology.

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