

THE EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON ONLINE LEARNING TOWARDS SPEAKING ABILITY

Eka Rochimatul Jannah

(Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris UNISMA)

Abstract:

The aim of this study was to investigate students' perception on online learning, students' perception in interacting on online learning, problems in interaction, and students' strategies. The data was gained by qualitative method using questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The participant of this research were sixth semester of English Department of University of Islam Malang. In this study, Qualitative case study was used in this research. Questionnaire and interview were used to collect the data. Questionnaire was using English that was adopted from (Fitriani et al., 2020). The language of semi-structured interview used English was conducted online. The data was analyzed using (Sugiyono, 2015). From the data identification, students' perception on online learning, most of the student did not agree that online learning could bring a positive effect on their speaking ability. Students found problems in interacting were on internet network, limited time and less interaction, and lack of vocabulary and practice. Fortunately, there were sixth strategies used by the students to overcome their problems for instance listening extensively, reading extensively, watching extensively, looking for fascinating topics, a lot of practicing speaking, and taking small notes.

Keywords: Perception in Online Learning, Problems in Speaking

INTRODUCTION

Reading, listening, writing, and speaking are four skills that must be mastered and understood by students when learning English. One of the most important skills to develop and master when learning English is speaking ability. Speaking is the most critical and important of the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is essential for good communication (Ur, 1996) .

However, in Indonesia, speaking English remains a problem and is sometimes hardly used in the social environment of students in the English classroom. The classroom environment is crucial to the teaching and learning process. According to Hannah (2013), the classroom is a place where students can develop some of the required and important skills for learning.

The classroom environment is where the teaching and learning process takes place. The communication between teacher and pupils, students with peers, equipment, and classroom conditions all contribute to the classroom environment. According to Zandvliet & Fraser (2004), the three aspects of assessing the classroom environment are the physical, psychological, and social framework. The social classroom environment is one of the factors that help English students communicate in English in their daily lives.

However, at the beginning of 2020, several nations throughout the world, including Indonesia, suffered challenges that disrupted human operations and had a significant influence on all sectors of life, as a result of the Covid-19 virus. The spread of coronavirus (covid-19) has had an impact on many aspects of global society, including the Indonesian people and academic community. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become increasingly difficult to get students to speak English properly in the classroom.

The effects of the severe COVID-19 pandemic prompted the switch to online learning mode. Because, as the Covid 19 pandemic increases students must attend online daily lessons. The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has released Circular Letter No. 15 of 2020, which contains guidelines for organizing learning from home in the Situation of Covid-19 spread. The aim of adopting learning from home, according to this circular, is to ensuring that students' rights are respected. Protect residents of education units from the bad impacts of Covid-19 (KEMENDIKBUD, 2020).

Schools and universities have been shuttered indefinitely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This transforms the traditional classroom learning approach into online learning. Teachers attempt to involve online learning media into their lessons despite knowing little about how their students utilize online learning media to develop their speaking abilities. Because students are at the core of the learning process, teachers need to understand their perspectives of online learning in order to assist those constructing instructional activities that are relevant to improve their speaking abilities.

Therefore, based on the background of this research, the researcher tried to investigate students' perceptions on EFL students' in online learning towards speaking ability by students of the English Education Department of UNISMA. So that it can be seen clearly what it is and how it helps teachers to find out students' perceptions of the difficulties faced by students.

Regarding to the students' perceptions, some researchers have been carried out the research related to this research. Alahmadi and Alraddadi (2020) these researchers involved 90 female Saudi students participating in this study. The finding of the study showed that virtual classrooms have a lot of promise in the EFL classroom. Virtual lessons may give adequate opportunity for contact with teachers as well as the acquisition of new language abilities.

In the same year, Wibowo and Khairunas (2020) this study analyzes 10 students of each class from public relation major who got public speaking course for one semester in Bina Sarana Informatika University. The finding showed that the online learning delivery of a public speaking course causes more discontent. Online learning is tedious, students face technological issues, and unpredictable internet connections are also an issue for students.

Another study conducted by Fitriani et al., (2020) the sample of this study was 83 participants randomly selected in non-English department students. The findings of this study, 14 of the 20 items shown disagree. This is due to the fact that online learning did not assist them in enhancing their speaking abilities. Some of the issues stem from the internet connection, available gadgets, and the data of the pupils, and some of them also wish to offer their ideas directly in class (face-to-face situation). On the other hand, pupils prefer to learn in an offline classroom rather than an online classroom.

Besides, another study conducted by Phirangee (2016) the sample of this study was 6 participants from the graduate students in University of Toronto. The findings of this study showed seven primary themes, the keener, a lack of meaningful discussion, selective listening, lack of attribution, tangents, and editing notes each of which demonstrated distinct forms of learner-learner interactions that harmed a feeling of community.

Related to the previous studies, this research investigates the EFL students' perceptions on online learning towards speaking ability in which different from previous studies. The difference is the researcher explains in more detail as regards to what factors faced during EFL students' interaction in online learning towards speaking ability and also what strategies they use to improve their speaking ability in online learning.

METHOD

The researcher used a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research is the research inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups (Creswell, 2012). Similar with the context of the current study, researcher tried to investigate EFL students' perceptions on online learning towards speaking ability. The participants of this study were 30 English students in the 6th semester of the English Education Department at University of Islam Malang, Indonesia. The questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants to answer the first research question about the EFL students' perceptions on online learning towards speaking ability. Furthermore, the research did interview four students to know deeply about their problems faced and strategies in online learning towards speaking abilities.

To get the data, researcher recruited students via messaging to be involved in answering the questionnaire in Google Form with 20 closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was adopted from (Fitriani et al., 2020) to find out participants perceptions of EFL students in online learning towards their speaking abilities. Then, a deep interview with four students was conducted to find out students' problems and strategies in online learning towards speaking abilities.

First step in analyzing the data was by calculating the raw data from the questionnaire into percentages, the percentages are obtained from each component. The formula of the percentage calculation by Sugiyono (2015). The findings of the data have been represented descriptively. Analyzing the data of the interview was listening to the talking data interview from students to know their problem and strategies in online learning towards their speaking ability. After listening their interviews, transcribe all of students' responses. Then, did the coding retrieve

from meaning-bearing units, each significance unit has been labeled with a code. The last step was confirmation, the researcher attempted to verify the interpretation's conclusion with the subject in this step. Verifying the data discovered and confirming that the participants agreed with the researcher's findings or conclusions.

FINDINGS

- **The EFL students' perceptions in online learning towards their speaking ability**

In this research, the researcher analyzed students' perception from questionnaire. Based on the result questionnaire, 4 items show disagrees, 1 item show strongly disagree. They prefer face-to-face learning, online learning does not help them to speak actively in class, and they have difficulty receiving the material. However, 2 items show neutral from their answer, they feel comfortable answering questions in online learning and they feel online learning has a great contribution to their interest in learning. There is one question that has 2 answers. The answers are disagree and neutral. It means some of the students choose to disagree and some others choose neutral. For some students online learning eases to overcome their problems in learning, but for some of them it does not affect. 6 items show disagree and 2 items show strongly disagree. They have difficulty interacting with each other and lecturers, the environment in online learning doesn't help them to improve their speaking ability, and the environment in online class is boring and doesn't make them active in discussion. However, 2 items show neutral from their answers, they felt the environment affects their ideas and affects their daily routine of learning.

Besides that, there are 2 items who answers agree. The environment of online learning makes it difficult to study and has an affect on their learning style. Most of the EFL students have negative perceptions of online learning.

- **The Problems Faced By EFL Students While Interacting in Online Classes**

Based on interview done with four students, the factor caused students' problems while interacting in online learning were because of the internet network. The EFL student faced some problems like internet error and bad connection, cannot access to join online class, getting difficult to get the lesson, and difficult to interacting in online class. The next problem is less interaction and time. The EFL student had problem in the time, because the student had limited times in online learning so that their interaction is less. The last problem is lack of vocabulary and practice. The EFL student faced some problems like lack of vocabulary and practice speaking, so that they could not speak English properly.

- **The Strategies Used By EFL Students To Improve Their Speaking Ability During Online Learning**

The strategies used by the students were extensive listening, extensive reading, extensive watching, looking for fascinating topics, a lot of practicing speaking, and taking small notes. Extensive listening, by doing extensive listening, students can add new vocabulary from listening to English music regularly, which will improve their speaking. Extensive reading, to improve their understanding of speaking by using grammar properly and can enrich their vocabulary so that they can speak English properly. Extensive watching, to improve their understanding and vocabulary of speaking English in a fascinating way. Looking for fascinating topics, get more attention and be fun for students, so that students are better at speaking English. Practice speaking, always practicing their speaking skills with others, students can practice pronunciation

and improve their speaking skills be properly. Taking small notes, they always take small notes to prevent them from forgetting what they are going to talk about later.

DISCUSSION

- **The EFL Students' Perceptions in Online Learning Towards Speaking Ability**

Based on the findings, most of the EFL students did not agree that online learning can bring a positive effect on their speaking ability. According to Phirangee (2016) that their online learning experience negatively affected this online learning, causing them to feel alienated and separated from their classmates and conversations. They were unable to improve their speaking ability through online learning (Fitriani et al., 2020). Wibowo and Khairunas (2020) stated that online learning delivery of a public speaking course causes more discontent.

- **The Problems Faced By EFL Students While Interacting in Online Classes**

According to the data collected from the interview sessions, there were some problems that EFL students' using English for speaking during their online learning. The four participants had the same problems as the interview results. First of all is internet network. According to Wibowo and Khairunas (2020) for students, an unstable connection was also an issue. This is seen as a very influential factor to the students in communication and interaction in online learning. The interaction in the classroom is very influential on the development of their speaking skills. In the classroom, student interaction is important because students may develop their speaking abilities by interacting with one another (Baron, 2020).

Second are limited class and less interaction. In this point, students have the opinion that the interaction in online learning is less than when face to face learning and they have limited time to learn in online classes. According to Zboun and Farrah (2021) interaction between students and

lecturers, as well as between students and their friends, is less than in face-to-face learning. Hamouda (2012) stated that due to the limited class time, EFL students did not get much speaking English practice in class and interacting with each other in the class.

Third is lack of vocabulary and practice. According to Hamouda (2012) in speaking English, a lack of vocabulary and lack of practice has been recognized as a main of student hesitation. It means, with a lack of mastered vocabulary and a lack of practice speaking, it causes students to be nervous and not confident in speaking or interacting in English.

- **The Strategies Used By EFL Students To Improve Their Speaking Ability During Online Learning**

After knowing the problems students' faced, they had some strategies during speaking activity. According to the interview results, the strategies used by the students were extensive listening, extensive reading, extensive watching, looking for fascinating topics, a lot of practicing speaking, and taking small notes. First, the students' strategies were extensive listening. Renandya and Jacobs (2016) stated that extensive listening can improve students' speaking skill. It means, by doing extensive listening, students can add new vocabulary from listening to English music regularly, which will improve their speaking.

Second, the strategy is extensive reading. Renandya and Jacobs (2016) stated that extensive reading has been found to improve vocabulary development and provide students with a better understanding of the English language's grammar. This strategy can be used by students to improve their understanding of speaking by using grammar properly and can enrich their vocabulary so that they can speak English properly.

Third, the strategy is extensive watching. Renandya and Jacobs (2016) stated that for students, watching fascinating video or movies can be a motivating experience. This strategy can

be used by students to improve their understanding and vocabulary of speaking English in a fascinating way.

Fourth, the strategy is looking for fascinating topics. Looking for fascinating topics is a strategy that students usually use. The students said that if they like a topic they are passionate about, they are eager to find related information and enjoy talking to others in English about the topics they have found. The chosen topic should get more attention and be fun for students, so that students are better at speaking English.

Fifth, the strategy is practice speaking. Students can use Zoom Cloud Meetings or other media to practice speaking with friends by using English for speaking, and they may also exchange material topics addressed during that session for make their speaking skill be better (Baron, 2020). By always practicing their speaking skills with others, students can practice pronunciation and improve their speaking skills be properly.

The last, the strategy is taking small notes. Students try to take small notes about important things that are being discussed by the lecturer in online learning and will be used for the next meeting. When students have to make presentations during online learning, they always take small notes to prevent them from forgetting what they are going to talk about later. The strategy is a great alternative for students to practice their speaking skills better.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It can be conclude that the EFL students' perception on online learning towards speaking ability, the majority of EFL students chose to disagree with the choices in each question of the questionnaire and the results of the interview that the students have many problems with their interactions using English to speak during online learning. Unfortunately, there were problems while interacting in online classes using English for speaking during online learning, are

linguistic elements and unstable networks. Finally, there were strategies to improve their speaking ability during online learning, are obtaining more input like as reading and listening, practicing speaking, and taking tiny notes were all strategies for improve their speaking. It was suggested that the students need to practice intensively with their peers, extensively read, listen, watch, and speak, don't be scared to make mistakes, and remind yourself that speaking English is extremely essential in today's world. Therefore, for English lecturer was suggested to be able to use a more attractive media platform for students to use so that they can more interactive and be active in online classes. Could assist and encourage students to find a solution to challenges encountered during online learning in order to enhance their speaking abilities. The last is the future researcher was suggested using instruments that can answer specifically and in detail for the research to be carried out and subjects or participants for data collection, using the right student semester according to the title of the research to be carried out and more EFL students to verify the results clear and detailed.

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