**EFL Students' Perceptions and Experiences On English Online Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic In A Vocational High School**

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic cannot be avoided at this time. Various policy changes began to be implemented, one of which was the online learning policy in all educational institutions, and one of them was the Vocational High School (SMK). During online learning, various kinds of obstacles arise, and of course, it is felt by vocational students. These obstacles give rise to various views of vocational students. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the perceptions of vocational students during online EFL classes. This study focused on six students of class XII Office Administration who participated in the study. This study uses a narrative inquiry research design. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were made during four meetings in learning through Google Meet calls. Interviews were conducted via Google Meet calls. And documentation in the form of photos of students in online learning activities. This research uses thematic analysis by Braun and Clark (2006), which includes six steps to analyze the data. The results of the study found that learning English online for vocational students had many obstacles. These obstacles include the lack of teachers using different media when doing online learning, being too fast and lacking in detail in delivering knowledge, students being lazy to learn because they are too dependent on translator applications, and problems with the students' or teachers' internet connections. However, there are advantages to online learning. The advantage is that they feel more courageous in expressing their opinions in the ongoing learning activities.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 Pandemic; EFL Student Perceptions and Experiences; Vocational High School

## INTRODUCTION

Explain online issue learning during the covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 pandemic brings about changing teaching and learning process. It needs to utilize online learning. It is in line with WHO policy of covid-19 as a pandemic. On March 11, 2020, World Health Organization declared, the coronavirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). It causes many countries to instruct their citizens to stay at home, avoid very close physical contact, and take social or physical distancing measures. Instructions were also issued to all educational institutions, and these institutions were instructed to arrange online classes. Therefore, virtual learning is the sole option for students and teachers to communicate with each other. Pandemic Covid-19 changes educations, face-to-face learning into virtual learning (The Jakarta Post, 2021). It means, previously, learning was carried out face-to-face between teachers and students. During the Covid-19 pandemic, students and teachers were required to learn in different places or distance learning. One of the schools in West Java is carrying out online learning, which was previously done offline at school (The Jakarta Post, 2020).

Online learning in EFL students in the Vocational High School becomes changelings for teachers. Among the challenges is where Vocational High School students have practical subjects. As for doing practical activities is quite tricky if done remotely. According to National Education Standards in Vocational High School / Madrasah Aliyah (2018), vocational high schools tend to have many practicums to support expertise in their field. It means Vocational high school is a school where the learning system focuses students more on practicum than theory. Vocational-related lessons that hold practicum and English lessons at Vocational High School also do many pieces of training. English is one of the languages widely used by Vocational High School students to support the vocations they take, such as Department of Office Administration, Hospitality, and others (Budi, Wawan and Reor, 2020). Online learning certainly makes teachers and students at Vocational High School make adaptations again in education. The challenge both educators and learners face is how education can go well. Because in this Covid-19 pandemic condition, doing online learning is the only way to run our education system in Indonesia.

In a study conducted by Sinan, Yasar et al. (2015) revealed that online learning at vocational high schools in Turkey creates negative responses from students. The role of technology is enormous, making students experience difficulties when learning takes place. However, Najmul and Yukun (2020) researched students in Wuhan regarding online learning, which positively impacted students' psychological distress. They only worry about the fear of academic year loss. Therefore, learning English at Vocational High School certainly raises various perceptions of students' experiences.

Positive and negative perceptions about the teaching method, student interaction with teachers, and the atmosphere of learning English occur. In this study,

researchers will determine the perceptions of Vocational High School students about learning English online. Although online learning has been discussed, some research concerns students' perceptions and experiences in online learning. Furthermore, this present study is emphasized on studying EFL students' perceptions and experiences in online learning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Previous Related Study

There are several previous studies related to this focus. Regarding Mahbud (2018) "English Teaching In Vocational High School: A Need Analysis," the study added that the needs and desires of vocational students in learning English are different. Considering the level of understanding of other students, they will be asked to understand the material to be delivered. Therefore, students convey their respective perceptions of what they ordered during the lesson. Another related study by Sinan, Yasar et al. 1 (2015), "Online learning in vocational schools: focus on students' perceptions," added that online English learning conducted in vocational high schools in Turkey received poor perceptions from students. Communicating directly with the teacher makes it difficult for students to ask questions about material that is not understood.

The latest related research based on Mulyanti (2020) "Distance Learning in Vocational High Schools during The COVID-19 pandemic in West Java Province, Indonesia" study added that all lessons conducted online, which were conducted in several vocational high schools with technical vocational respondents in Java, based on the survey received a poor response, considering that vocational high school not only learning theory but direct practice. One of the subjects affected by not being able to carry out practical activities is learning English.

### Perceptions

Perception is humans thinking about specific phenomena, according to Walgito (2003: 87). The point is that perception is a person's view of an experienced event, seen, etc. Perception can be asked from various sides, as we hear the word student's perception. Students' perception is how students select, organize, and interpret the information received to create a meaningful thing related to learning at school, the teacher, or the school. Either it yields benefits or challenges. English is an international language which is one of the benefits of EFL students learning English. The lack of English in society is one of the challenges for EFL students learning English; in other words, English outside the classroom is still lacking (Hibatullah, 2019).

In learning English, EFL students have a perception of the teaching and learning process taking place. Students in vocational high schools in Indonesia are EFL students. They have various perceptions about learning English in their schools,

considering that English is a supporting language for vocational high school students in performing skills when participating in learning related to majors. As in the Office Administration department, English is used as a support when students are asked to write letters in English, make calls in English, make presentations in English, etc.

Therefore, students in vocational high schools can perceive the subject teachers are concerned about learning in their classrooms, primarily online because considering the importance of learning English for the vocational high school students. And the teacher can accept the perceptions of students, which will later be taken into consideration in carrying out learning in class. Seperti dalam penelitian yang dilakukan oleh Ari Arman (2020) tentang penggunaan WhatsApp dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Vocational High School. Ari membuktikan bahwa penggunaan WhatsApp dapat membantu siswa Vocational High School dalam English Online Learning in Pandemi Covid-19.

**Experiences**

Experience can be obtained by anyone, including one experienced by students. Student experience in response to a report finding that claimed this factor is the most important in assessing quality in higher education (Harvey, Burrows, and Green, 1992). The experience of students at school certainly includes various aspects. It can be in terms of learning, teachers, facilities obtained by students, and so on. For example, students' experiences in learning, when EFL students in the vocational high school category learn English, will make profound observations. The teacher explains the material, what material is presented, what material they understand and even remember, and observes how the English teacher brings the class atmosphere to life when learning occurs.

Others cannot represent such experiences because they will experience them themselves without the help of others. Of course, if they do it themselves, they will understand more about the learning, rather than asking other people or asking for help from others. However, the experience can lead to both good and bad experiences. Student experience in response to a report finding that claimed this factor is the most important in assessing quality in higher education (Harvey, Burrows, and Green, 1992). Looking at the opinions above, we can conclude that EFL students' experiences are students who have experience learning English, both offline and online.

Experience is obtained when the student feels it. For example, students in vocational high schools have lessons that have a lot to do with the majors they take. When the student majors in Office Administration, there will be many lessons related to that major. Apart from that, of course, there are other subjects such as English. Students are required to be proficient in English, both spoken and written. However, whether the experience of students learning English so far is good or vice versa. Students can record their experiences learning English. After experiencing,

maybe students will have an opinion about the learning. So, EFL Students' perceptions and experiences are processes where students interpret something related to their learning English based on the experiences that they have experienced.

## Language Learning

Schunk (2012:3) defined learning as a process that comes about in enduring behavioral change. From practice or other shapes of experience naturally produces various behaviors in specific ways and certain capacities. Moreover, Schunk (2012:346) also sees that understudy learning starts with the knowledge and skills brought to the circumstance created and refined as one of the learning capacities.

Oroujlo and Vahedi (2011:994) expressed that English is acknowledged as the key to success in life if fluency in English is well mastered. English is a crucial instrument in counting scientific communication, trade, social trade, political things, etc. Besides, Delahunty and Garvey (2010:7) stated that dialect is the most communication medium between students and teachers and between students and textbooks in educational offices. Students who think about English as second language specialists will have difficulty multiplying since English is at the same time both their educational facilities and objects.

From the clarification above, it can be concluded that learning will give experience through the knowledge and skills gotten during the learning process. Learning English is the key to success because of its importance in different viewpoints of life.

## English Online Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic in a Vocational High School

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has been the defining global health crisis since its emergence in Asia in 2019. On March 11, 2020, World Health Organization declared, the coronavirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). Indonesia is one of the countries affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. That causes the government to decide to carry out activities at home, even if it requires leaving the house, must use good health protection.

According to the US Department of Education, 2010, online learning can be defined as "Learning that occurs partly or entirely via the Internet." So online learning is learning English remotely between teachers and students, both of which require the help of the internet and electronic media that support learning implementation. English online learning in vocational high school is related to vocational learning, such as communicating well with colleagues using English, writing letters in English, making presentations in English, and so forth. (National Education Standards in Vocational High Schools / Vocational Madrasah Aliyah: 2018). It is not just that students memorize grammar theory, pronunciation, etc., but it needs

the practice to be more proficient. It requires good coordination between the school and teachers and teachers and students regarding online English learning. Good coordination and communication can lead to an agreement that later, the goal of English online learning can run well.

Students' perception and experience in online English learning can be related to teachers' teaching methods, teacher and student interactions during learning, and the learning atmosphere. Students can judge based on the experiences they have experienced without guessing.

## METHOD

### Design and Samples

In this study, the object of this study was to find out the perceptions of vocational students in learning during EFL online learning during the covid-19 pandemic. A qualitative approach was chosen to utilize this research. This study uses Narrative Inquiry as the research design. Thus, the design is used to obtain in-depth data information and describe in detail how students' perceptions are based on their experiences when learning English is done online during the covid-19 pandemic in SMK. This research was conducted at one of the Vocational High Schools in Bogor. It involved twelfth graders of office administration class which consisted of six female students as participants. The researcher used to select participants in class XII office administration randomly.

### Instrument and Procedure

Data collection is done by three techniques; semi-structured interviews as the main data while observation and documentation as supporting data. Semi-structured interviews in the form of open-ended questions are to provide the opportunity for researchers to explore information through follow-up questions based on participant responses. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, namely online through Google Meet. For observation, how English learning is done online. Learning is carried out by all students of class XII office administration. For documentation is a picture of students during the learning process.

Related to the current situation, the research procedure during the learning process uses WhatsApp online media as information. This study lasted for four weeks. The first week, the teacher provides material and practice using Google Meet. The second week, the teacher gives practice questions, in which students will be asked to answer the questions in turn, and will discuss the material related to these questions. In the third week, the teacher gave practice to the students again, and students were asked to work on and answer the questions in the student worksheets. The fourth week, the teacher provides exercises in the form of exercises for the midterm examination later. and as usual, students are asked to work on the questions first, then discuss them together. Also in the fourth week, the researcher conducted

interviews with six people in turn through Google Meet. During the interview, the researcher took notes and recorded the interview. During the learning activities, researchers made observations to obtain supporting information to support the results of student interviews. For documentation, required during student participation in Kahoot via Google Meet.

## Data Analysis

The data analysis used thematic analysis by Braun and Clark (2006). The following analysis included six steps; familiarising the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming data, and producing the report. For the questionnaire, it used percentages of frequency students who responded.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

## Result

### The importance of English for students in vocational high school (office administration)

Of course, vocational schools that have a major in Office Administration will use English in several activities. Students are asked to understand and be able if asked to do tasks related to vocational using English. Therefore, English is very supportive of the learning of Vocational High School students majoring in Office Administration. Moreover, six students revealed that English is essential to be mastered by high school students majoring in English. Therefore, their enthusiasm when learning English is evident by their always being present when learning. Transcribed data interview was reported from participants as below.

> "That is very important. For example, we are studying for a business trip. So that's where we learn how to write letters in English. If we don't understand English, it will be confusing for us." (Student 1. AN)

> "I think you are critical. The office world cannot be separated from foreign languages. For example, there are foreign clients, and we cannot speak Indonesian. Of course, we speak in English, unless the client can speak Indonesian; Mastery of Microsoft office uses English. If we don't understand, it will not be easy; and others you. The point is that English in the office administration department is critical to learn." (Student 6. MA)

Referring to data transcription above, students claimed that English lessons were essential to support studies related to the majors they were taking, namely office administration. And according to them, English is not only functional when they are still in school when they enter the world of work; English is also very often used. Therefore, they consider English essential for them.

The data interview could be supported by the observation data from the first meeting until the fourth meeting. All participants pay attention to the teacher when explaining. Proven when the teacher asks them, they can answer correctly. And they did not only answer the teacher's questions, but they also actively asked the teacher about the material presented when they felt they did not understand.

**The difficulty of English Online Learning**

English Online Learning is a lesson that was carried out when the covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia. The transition of English offline learning to English online learning certainly appears some obstacles when learning takes place. Like English online learning conducted by students on of Vocational High School in Bogor, several obstacles emerged. Transcribed data interview was reported from participants as below.

> *"The signal is sometimes not good; the focus is sometimes disturbed by the people in your house." (Student 1. AN)*
> *"The signal is like bad; quotas are wasteful, if you don't get them from the government, you spend much money to buy quotas; the phone heats up fast; also sometimes the teacher's signal is bad; The tempo of her mother's voice is fast." (Student 6. MA)*

Referring to data transcription above, students claimed that English online learning had many problems when implemented. Many problems occur in technical issues, such as signal problems. The better the signal, the better they will receive learning from the teacher. However, there are not only technical constraints. There are also non-technical obstacles.

> *"I don't think it's good to learn English online. The more I don't understand, I learn it sometimes if the material is difficult." (Students 3. SN)*
> *"It's delicious, I'm happy. But if it's compared to offline learning, it's better to learn offline; it's more fun to learn." (Student 6. MA)*

Referring to data transcription above, students claimed English online learning also had problems delivering material by the teacher when doing online learning at Google meet. According to them, when learning English online, the teacher conveys the material too quickly, and the teacher also does not use other media to support when the teacher explains.

They are also supported by some of their stories about the difficulty of learning English online even though they are very excited when learning English online because some obstacles cause some problems in their online English learning.

> *"...for example, the rich network is bad. At Mapel, Mrs. Rini herself uses an exciting way of learning, and sometimes she likes to break up the network and even go out on her own, so it's hard to understand..." (Student 2. SP)*
> *"...like a quota that runs out quickly because you have to be online all day, signals, materials, focus. The thing that bothers me the most is the problem of focus, sometimes the house is boisterous, and when you're busy, the*

*sounds collide. Often also annoyed by chat notifications from friends, they chat when they are on duty/gmeet, so confused to reply...” (Student 6. MA)*

Based on the story above, it also shows that it is difficult for them to learn English. They are aware of the importance of English for their high school students; therefore, they are trying very hard to understand better the material presented. Starting from them, they often use google translate to know the meaning of the English sentence. Even though they can look up words they don't understand in the dictionary, they are lazy and look for more practical ones.

**Vocational High School students' wishes on online English learning**

As vocational high school students majoring in office administration where English is one of the important things to master, they have high hopes that learning English online at their schools has changed. Because they are not a few who are enthusiastic when learning English in class, they become confused when learning English online. Transcribed data interview was reported from participants as below.

*"The teaching system is more detailed so that the material is easy to understand. I want to make a learning video. Don't explain it too fast.” (Student 1. AN)*

*"When I explain it in more detail, I also explain it using the blackboard so I can understand it better, give lots of examples too.” (Student 3. SN)*

Referring to data transcription above, students claimed some hope for online English learning in the future. The hope is almost all directed to the English teacher. First, teacher creativity. They hope that teachers also use other learning media, for example, the help of Microsoft Word or Microsoft PowerPoint, when explaining the use of words in a sentence. It will be even more accessible when the teacher displays presentation slides and is assisted with doodles like a teacher explaining on a blackboard. Their next hope is that the teacher should not explain too quickly. Because they are often left behind to write explanations delivered by the teacher. And finally, when they were asked, they were confused about what to ask because it was difficult for them to explain the reason because all the material had not been recorded.

And the teacher should explain the material in detail. The turn of learning English online made their concentration reduced by several factors. So they find it difficult to digest the material presented by the teacher if they do not explain it in detail. Sometimes, the time is too short or confused about what you want to ask if you're going to ask. They want their hopes to be realized for the smooth running of online English learning activities in their schools, which will produce good results by quickly understanding the material presented and speaking good and correct English.

**Discussion**

Learning English online for vocational high school students has many challenges. Following Mulyanti et al. (2021), it is stated that learning English in vocational high school has problems. The obstacle came from the English teacher and technical barriers. It makes students' focus and enthusiasm for learning decrease. Vocational students whose main point is the industry will indeed not be separated from English. SMK students must at least master basic English because vocational students are students whose main core will enter the industrial world. As research conducted by Mahbud (2018) said, English cannot be separated in the industrial world. (Mahbud, 2018). therefore, every student must always prepare it all to answer the challenges of the industrial world.

English is one of the most widely used languages in office administration. They start from speaking, writing, and reading. English is one of the expectations relevant to their future work for secretarial program students (Office Administration). (ESP, 1998, p.76). And these obstacles are also felt by high school students. Many of their subjects related to their majors use English as well, such as in the department of office administration. (Mulyanti, 2021). They must master how to write letters in English, speak English, etc. However, they are constrained by poor signals, teachers who are not excellent in delivering learning, and they do not get additional skills in English.

Therefore, in this study, students' obstacles in doing English learning online seemed to be felt. Even though they need English to support their skills later in the industrial world, they have problems when they want to do online learning. And as a result, they have quite a lot of misunderstandings and are left behind in the material. Every student has hope for better learning in their school, and every student has different course expectations. Expectations of students who are most commonly found include, teachers should use media that can make learning easy to understand. As research conducted by Mulyanti (2020), teachers should use other supporting media when doing online learning. So that when the teacher explains, students can also know the teacher's explanation in writing. Because sometimes, students can understand the material just by looking at the teacher's explanation in writing.

Another student hopes that the teacher should explain the material in detail and not in a hurry. The clarity of the material presented makes it easier for students to understand the material presented. As in the research conducted by Mahbud (2018) on learning English in vocational high schools, teachers who explain in detail and a hurry can easily understand the material presented. Even though learning English is done online, teachers should always try to improve the way they teach because not a few students expect that offline learning at school is done. As in a study conducted by Erliana (2021), students in vocational high schools hope to immediately accomplish offline learning at school because of the ineffectiveness of online learning at home. Given the difficulty of learning online at home, most students, especially vocational high school students, expect learning to be done offline at school because they can practice English in subjects related to the vocational they take (office administration).

**CONCLUSION**

Referring to the findings and discussion above, online English learning conducted on vocational high school students is lacking. This makes it difficult for students to understand the material presented. Obstacles such as the lack of teachers in using supporting media when learning and being too fast when delivering material make students still groping for the material explained by the teacher. Obstacles, such as poor signals, are also obstacles when students are learning. And not only that, the students who are currently more dependent on the internet instantly make it lazy to deepen the lesson because they think later they can search for answers on google.

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