

## VIDEOCONFERENCING FOR SPEAKING ASSESSMENT MEDIUM: ALTERNATIVE OR DRAWBACK?

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### **Abstract:**

*The present study aimed at unraveling the perception and obstacles faced during the implementation of videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium. This study applied qualitative research with a snapshot case study design. The participants of the study included 44 students and one lecturer in a vocational education institution. In collecting the data, this study utilized questionnaire form, interview guide, and observation sheet as the instruments. This study gained the data through questionnaires for students, focus group discussion with the students, and an interview with the students and the lecturer. The data were then analyzed by classifying the data and removing any redundancies. As a result, it was found that the majority of the students perceived negatively toward the implementation of videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium due to the nervousness and anxiety along the online speaking assessment process. Then, there were some obstacles faced, including bad internet connection, technical problems, and surrounding disturbance, which also contributed to students' language receipt and production during the online speaking assessment. From the results of the present study, it is suggested to reappraise the application of videoconferencing as a medium in assessing students' speaking ability, especially in dealing with the drawbacks given.*

**Keywords:** *assessment, obstacles, perception, videoconferencing,*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The current issue on the spread of coronavirus plays a significant role in the urgency of technology integration in the teaching and learning process. Previously, Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture instructed that all teaching and learning processes during the

pandemic have to be transferred into an online platform (Winahyu, 2020). This regulation is taken as a preventive way to stop the spread of the virus by having less interaction in the classroom and letting the students study at home (Winahyu, 2020). By receiving the regulation, the educational institutions have to shift their face to face teaching and learning process into virtual learning by integrating technology. Due to a sudden policy, less proper preparation on utilizing the technology integration occurs, not only in the teaching and learning processes but also in assessing students' learning progress (Turmudi,2020b).

This study, therefore, investigated the use of one online interaction medium, videoconferencing, as a medium in assessing students' speaking ability. Having an investigation on the application of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment can give a contribution in providing insight on videoconferencing's effectiveness as a medium for English teacher and lecturer in assessing students' speaking performance. Henceforth, to give a clearer view, theoretical and empirical review on technology integration and videoconferencing in English language teaching are required to seek the potential of this technology-based media. This framework is also under the essence of 'teacher practicality and responsibility and students' right and their learning concern' (Turmudi,2020b, p. 2) a web-based technology not only in speaking but also in writing.

Profoundly, technology integration gives new colors to the teaching and learning process, especially in language learning; it brings new insights and also challenges. As an insight, the existence of technology can boost teaching and learning effectiveness. Several prior researchers have unraveled the effect of integrating technology in English teaching and learning activity for both lecturers and students. For the lecturer, the existence of technology in the classroom may decrease the stressful learning environment (Utami & Nova, 2018) teaching and learning processes and instructions (Meshkat & Mohammadpoor, 2015).

The technology application in teaching and learning activity can also ease the process of task completion (Anikina et al., 2015) and information transfer to the students (Delgado et al., 2015). Additionally, the application of technology integration in teaching and learning activity also influences the students' perception of the learning process. It could rise their motivation in learning (Ali, 2016) along with their interest in the process of learning and enthusiasm (Alresheed et al., 2015). Not only on their perceptions, but the integration of technology also fosters students' independence in learning which focuses on students' learner

autonomy (Kofar, 2016) and results in a student-centered teaching and learning activity (Røkenes, 2016). As a challenge, the application of technology also contributes several drawbacks for lecturers and students who have not been ready for the rapid innovation in technology integration.

Albeit the school and university have provided the technology tools as a facility in the teaching and learning process, the preparation of technology-based media becomes a matter. The lecturer should spend more time in seeking sufficient online learning sources and integrating them into the learning media, whereas, they commonly have limited time (Mollaei & Riasati, 2013). Moreover, the recent updates of technology tools require logical computational thinking skills. On the other hand, not all lecturers are capable of certain computer operations due to their limited computer skills and literacy (Faraji et al., 2015) and they need to attend a workshop or training in using the technological tools (Kofar, 2016).

Furthermore, the lack of technical supports, such as the limited access to the internet (Lubis, 2018), or the unavailability of technicians in dealing with the broken utilities (Nova, 2017), also gives a contribution in creating less conducive performance during the learning activity. Also, the existence of technology also gives a drawback for the students. Despite creating fun learning, the existence of technology just distracts the students from the learning track itself; they focus on the media, not on the learning material (Nova, 2017). Therefore, the reconsideration of technology tools selection should become an essential point for the lecturers before implementing it in online teaching and learning activity.

In line with the technology tools reconsideration, there are several online applications or media that can be provided by the lecturers for online English teaching and learning activity. On reading activity, they can provide authentic reading material (Rusmawaty et al., 2018; Zorina et al., 2019), such as articles on the internet, and then provide a quiz to assess students' reading progress. Then, for listening, they can invite the students to listen to several online podcasts (Abdulrahman et al., 2018; Naidionova & Ponomarenko, 2018) and give them several questions related to the content of the podcast to check their listening comprehension.

Meanwhile, for writing, they can ask the students to write a piece of writing and submit them to an automated writing evaluation program which provides analytical program for detecting any grammatical errors and its feedback on the writing (Nova, 2018; Wang,

2013) or using screencast for giving feedback on the students' writing (Ali, 2016). On speaking, the lecturers can provide audio recording tasks, video recording tasks, or even videoconferencing (Banegas & Brovotto, 2020) to practice their speaking. However, in deciding the tools for assessing the speaking skill, a tool for synchronous speaking assessment is required. Up to this point, a web-based technology may become a good alternative as part of integrating media into education sector in general and particularly in the teaching speaking (Turmudi,2020b)

Synchronous speaking assessment becomes a matter nowadays due to the demand of the communicative aspect as one of the main concerns in learning in 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill enhancement. The oral communicative skill becomes an essential mean in sharing information through the listening and speaking processes (Leow et al., 2014). In communicating with other people, students are required to have the capability in expressing their idea or opinion in spontaneous responses and thus, it becomes an essential part of language learning (Loranc-paszylk, 2015). The responses given by the students will reflect their ability in speaking, including pronunciation, accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and content of the speech. Thus, it is needed a tool which can accommodate a real-time interaction between lecturer and student in speaking assessment.

To accommodate the real-time interaction in speaking assessment, videoconferencing can be implemented to fulfill the demand. Videoconferencing is one medium of communication which includes two or more speakers in different locations to connect and interact in a virtual platform (Rop & Bett, 2012). Different from text-based communication, videoconferencing provides audio and visual modes for the speakers to enable them in hearing and seeing each other in real time (Loranc-paszylk, 2015). By utilizing the videoconferencing, the process of the interaction between the speakers can be accommodated and supported by visual representation which can give additional real-time interaction experience.

Previously, the application of videoconferencing in speaking activities has been investigated. It has been found that the teaching and learning process becomes more interactive (Rop & Bett, 2012) and more engaging among the learners (Vurdien, 2019) by providing real-time videoconference rather than other electronic media. Moreover, the utilization of videoconference can provide the speaker the nonverbal communication matters, such as facial expressions, gestures (Archibald et al., 2019), and some unseen physical actions

during the speaking performance (Iacono et al., 2016; Rintel, 2013), such as reading notes. Consequently, this kind of situation will also possibly give more anxiety and pressure (Archibald et al., 2019; Krouwel et al., 2019), especially for the students, during the speaking activity. In other words, the application of videoconference can provide closer context to real-time communication in an authentic situation (Loranc-paszyk, 2015).

The utilization of videoconferencing in speaking activity may provide both benefits and drawbacks, nevertheless, the application of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment has not been deeply investigated. Having an investigation on the application of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment can give an insight on its effectiveness as a medium for English teacher and lecturer in assessing students' speaking performance. Therefore, this study was conducted under two research questions:

- (1) How was the students' perception of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment?
- (2) What are obstacles faced during the application of the videoconferencing?

## METHOD

### *Design*

As the aim of the study was to find out the utilization of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment, this study applied qualitative research with a snapshot case study design. Through this research design, one particular case in one period of time was investigated with an in-depth description and analysis of the data through various data collection. By applying various data collection, a deeper insight into the utilization of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment could be achieved.

Specifically, the case taken in this study was the utilization of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment in an on-interview simulation in a vocational higher education institution. The online interview simulation was conducted via videoconferencing using one of the online chatting platforms, named *WhatsApp*. Before conducting the online interview simulation, the interview guidelines and the criteria for the speaking assessment were distributed to the participants to give clearer insight on conducting the simulation. Then, each participant was video called one by one and each of them was required to answer several

questions related to the job interview. Each interview section took 10 – 15 minutes per participant.

***Participant***

In conducting the study, this study took place in a vocational institute. There were two classes, with a total of 44 students and one lecturer, who participated in this study. These students were fourth-semester students majoring Culinary Management Study Program. In the fourth semester, these students are required to take English for Interview Preparation subject as a preparation for their training program. In this subject, the teaching and learning processes were conducted through writing practice, peer discussions, oral presentations, and speaking practice. At the end of the semester, the students were required to perform a job-interview simulation in which they play a role as a candidate for a job position as a chef in a hotel restaurant. During the online interview simulation, their speaking ability was being assessed.

**Table 1.** Student’s Demography

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender		
Male	31	70.5
Female	13	29.5
Experience in Face-to-Face Interview		
Having Experience in Face-to-Face Interview	34	77.3
Having No Experience in Face-to-Face Interview	10	22.7
Experience in Online Interview		
Having Experience in Online Interview	3	6.8
Having No Experience in Online Interview	41	93.2

***Data and Source of Data***

As a case study, the data was obtained based on the application of videoconferencing as the medium for speaking assessment. In this study, there are two kinds of data collected. The first data is the perception of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment. This data was mainly obtained from the students as the participant of the speaking assessment and then confirmed by the lecturer who managed the speaking assessment process. The second data is the common obstacles faced during the application of the videoconferencing. This data was also mainly obtained from the students and also confirmed by the lecturer. Both of these data were gained in the form of qualitative data.

### ***Data Collecting Technique***

The data collection was started after all students have participated in the online interview simulation. After conducting the online interview simulation, each student was asked to fill an online questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of 2 close-ended questions which identified their experience in a face-to-face interview (Q1) and online interview (Q2) and 2 open-ended questions which explored the students' perspective on the use of videoconferencing in online interview simulation (Q3) and the obstacles they faced during the online interview simulation (Q4). Moreover, to provide in-depth insight, a small discussion was also held via an online chatting group with the students to confirm and to clarify several statements they have mentioned on the questionnaire. In addition, an interview with the lecturer was also conducted to triangulate the student's responses and to gain further insight into the application of videoconferencing from the lecturer's view.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The data was analyzed through four phases. First, after the data was collected, the raw data was separated into two major categories: perception and obstacles. Second, each data from each category was filtered into a certain classification. Third, any redundancies in data filtration were sorted out. Last, the results of data analysis were displayed in two headings: the perceptions on the videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium and the obstacles during the application of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment.

Finally, the whole process of reporting is by MS Office 2016 while intext citation and reference list uses APA style 6<sup>th</sup> edition and Offline automatic system by using Mendeley Desktop (Turmudi, 2020a).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Result***

In this section, the results of this study were elaborated. They were gained from the result of data analysis based on the observation, questionnaires, group discussion, and interviews which were applied to gain a deeper insight on the utilization of videoconferencing. The results were divided into two sections based on the research questions: the perception of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment and the



obstacles of using videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment.

***The Perception of Videoconferencing as a Medium for Speaking Assessment***

The perceptions of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment are reflected in this part. Table 2 provides a summary of the responses to the open-ended questions for Q3 and focus group discussion which identified the students’ perception to have videoconferencing as a medium for their speaking assessment. As a result, the students perceive that this kind of speaking assessment medium makes them feel various feelings during the online simulation, including nervousness, relaxation, anxiety, and shyness.

**Table 2.** Summary of the responses regarding the perceptions toward the videoconferencing application

N(44)	Dominating Tendencies	Interesting Answers
How does it feel to have videoconferencing as a medium for your interview simulation?	Feeling nervous – 31 answers (70.45%)	“I was so nervous, even more nervous than having face-to-face interview because I personally prefer to have face-to-face interview.” (S.9)
		“I felt nervous since this is my first time to be interviewed online by video call.” (S.2)
		“It was so nervous in the beginning. My answers are unclear and I know my English pronunciation is not good.” (S.8)
	Feeling more relax – 7 answers (15.90%)	“It is just the same with the real face-to-face interview, but I feel better using video call since I do not need to go somewhere else.” (S.42)
		“I feel more relax, maybe, because I do not see the person in real.” (S.35)
		“It was great because this is my first time in using video call for my interview so it becomes my new experience.” (S.12)
	Feeling anxiety – 5 answers (11.37%)	“I panic because I cannot listen to the interviewer voice, and I am afraid if I response it incorrectly.” (S.19)
		“It is so uncomfortable, because I do not have proper equipment, like earphone. Then, in my place, the signal is also bad.” (S.44)
		“I felt worry because I have limited access to the internet and I am afraid if the connection goes bad, I will get bad score.”



		(S.33)
	Feeling shy – 1 answer (2.28%)	“It was embarrassing but so funny. My family listened to me during the simulation and they laughed sometime.” (S.20)

The result obtained mostly showed that the application of videoconferencing raises students’ nervousness. Most of them admitted that this simulation becomes their first time online-interview experience and some of them assumed that this first-time experience gave more pressure on them. This nervousness issue is also admitted by the lecturer who confirmed that, in the beginning, the students answered the questions with trembling voices and sometimes, they avoided eye contact with the lecturer.

Aside from being nervous, a number of students felt another negative feeling occurred during the online simulation, namely anxiety. It was obtained that the students’ negative feeling occurred as the result of the incapability of having stabilized connection and proper utilities to hold an online interview, such as poor internet connection, unclear voice, limited quota, and limited earphone functionality. Beside of being anxious about the technical problems, a unique factor also appeared in one student who mentioned having the fear of getting a bad score as the result of the technical problems. This student admitted that during the interview, she experienced some lagging screens and unclear voice from the interviewer. This point is also admitted by the lecturer who emphasized that the unstable connection became the major problem during the online simulation. In the middle of the online simulation, the lecturer also often experienced the lagging screens due to the unstable connection and even, some of the videoconferencing sessions were disconnected. Then, regarding the students’ anxiety on the scoring, the lecturer also could not deny the pressure existing on conducting an assessment. As this interview simulation became one assessment taken for the students’ grade, the lecturer mentioned that “*The pressure may occur differently during their practice which took face-to-face interaction as the set of the interview*”. In other words, the atmosphere of having an online interview gives another level of anxiety; beside of having anxieties on the bad performance, the students were also being anxious about having a lack technology support.

Furthermore, being shy was also occurred during the online simulation using the videoconference platform. This feeling occurred on a student who took his home as the online

simulation place and the family member listened to the conversation between the student and the lecturer. The existence of other people around the student raises the student’s discomfort, especially when the student slipped his tongue while speaking. The pressure given around the student’s environment influenced the student confidence in speaking and resulting in having less confidence than other students in performing the simulation.

Even though most of the students felt the negative feelings during the online simulation, some of the students felt more relaxed in having the online simulation rather than the face-to-face situation. This positive feeling is reflected in students’ answers on the questionnaire. On their perspectives, the situation occurring on online simulation, which they did not meet the interviewer in real, reduced their tense and made them easier to control their nervousness. Even though it was their first-time experience, they also see it as a valuable experience in facing the real interview. This condition was also confirmed by the lecturer who observed that some of the students showed a positive attitude and from the facial expression and gestures, the lecturer could see that these students have less tense and less problem with nervousness. Moreover, the lecturer also added that “*some of them even smiled and laughed like it was not a simulation, just like a normal talk in the classroom*”.

***The Obstacles of Using Videoconferencing as a Medium for Speaking Assessment***

The obstacles of videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment are reflected in this part. Table 3 provides a summary of the responses to the open-ended questions for Q4 which identified the challenges faced by the students’ during the application of videoconferencing. As a result, three kinds of challenges were identified, namely bad signal connection, technical problems, and surrounding disturbance.

**Table 4.** Summary of the responses regarding the obstacles during the videoconferencing application

N(44)	Dominating Tendencies
What kind obstacles did you face during your interview simulation?	Bad signal connection – 27 answers (61.36%)
	Technical problems – 12 answers (27.28%)
	Surrounding disturbance – 5 answers (11.36%)

In using videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium, a majority of the students experienced bad signal connections. They admitted that during the question and

answer session, the bad signal connection distracted their focus on speaking as they got a lagging screen for few times (*“For me, the major problem is the bad connection. I don’t know whether it occurred on the interviewer or me, and it was really distracting me during the interview as the voice is lagged and paused for a long time.”* S.41). On the group discussion, some of them confirmed that the bad signal connection occurred as they live in the village where the internet connection is limited. The lecturer also admitted that the bad signal connection also distracted her in grading the speaking performance due to unclear voice and long paused speech resulted from the lagging screen.

Aside from having bad internet connections, the technical problems were also experienced by the students during the speaking assessment. The students expressed their frustration in dealing with the online speaking assessment by mentioning their broken utilities, such as broken earphones (*“... and I think my earphones are broken. The lecturer even asked me several times to repeat my answer.”* S.43) and broken loudspeaker (*“... when the lecturer asked the question, I cannot hear the voice clearly because my phone loudspeaker is broken...”* S.33). These technical problems made the students uncomfortable in having the online speaking assessment and started to worry about the assessment result. They worry that their answer was misheard by the lecturer and it led to a mistake, such as misspelling or mispronunciation. In line with the students’ worry, the lecturer admitted that the quality of students’ voices played a significant role in the speaking assessment. However, the lecturer had given several notices if the students’ voice was unclear enough to hear and thus, the lecturer asked the students to repeat the answer to ensure that the students had given the right answer to the question.

Another problem experienced by the students during the online speaking assessment was the surrounding disturbance. A few students admitted that during the assessment process, their environment was not in silence, (*“... My house is next to the main road and it was so noisy outside because there is a hotel construction in front of my house.”* S.11) and one student mentioned that this disturbance decreased his focus during the assessment (*“The voice is unclear, and I need to find a silent place to make me more focus.”* S.24). The occurring disturbance influenced the students’ hearing capability which made them take a longer time to understand what was spoken by the interviewer. Moreover, one student also mentioned that the people around her also kept distracting her during the speaking assessment (*“It was*

*embarrassing but so funny. My family listened to me during the simulation and they laughed sometimes.*" S.20). Regarding the surrounding disturbance, the lecturer admitted the cases. During the online speaking assessment, the lecturer even asked about the current condition on the students' surrounding so that it was clearer to grade students' performance.

### ***Discussion***

The result of the present study focused on the implementation of videoconferencing as a medium of speaking assessment. The findings on the present study revealed some consistencies to the prior studies. Therefore, some interpretations of the current study were made based on two points, the perceptions and the obstacles.

In dealing with the perception, the findings of the present study revealed both negative and positive perceptions toward the use of videoconferencing. Unraveling the negative perception, the students admitted that they had negative reactions to having videoconferencing in their speaking assessment, especially on nervousness and anxieties. On the contrary, some of the students were still relaxed and claimed that they felt more comfortable being interviewed on videoconference. Dealing with these perceptions issue, the rise of nervousness, anxieties, and relaxation issues have been found also on prior studies. The nervousness might rise due to the mode of the interview (Krouwel et al., 2019) as the students experienced having an online interview for the first time. As a first-time taker, it is a common situation if the students have nervousness, especially they also emphasized feeling worried about any technical problem, like the internet connection and broken earphones, which also occurred in another study (Archibald et al., 2019). In addition, nervousness can also occur as the result of having time pressure in a real-time interaction (Loranc-paszylk, 2015), which demands the students to spontaneously respond to the lecture's questions. These negative reactions may lead to stress which could limit students' performance (Loranc-paszylk, 2015). On the other hand, the feeling of relax and comfortable in having online interview was also occurred. The videoconferencing serves limited screen sharing and this situation made The students can be more focused on observing the lecturer's facial expressions and have a more relaxing conversation (Archibald et al., 2019). By having a more relaxed conversation, the students' confidence in speaking was boosted and having more engaging interaction during the speaking assessment (Vurdien, 2019).

Comparing the weight between the negative and positive perceptions, the result of the present study tended to reveal that having videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium is perceived negatively by the students. Although other studies revealed that videoconferencing can bring positive impacts on speaking enhancement, in this study, it is unraveled that the application of videoconferencing may bring different effect on language production if it is utilized as the speaking assessment medium. The pressure and also the anxiety felt by the students during speaking practice will occur differently when it is set as a speaking assessment medium. In line with the point given, the time pressure in giving spontaneous response adds more level of nervousness and anxiety which lead to a stress that limits students' performance. Therefore, it has clearly answered the first research question that the videoconferencing as a medium for speaking assessment perceived negatively by the students.

Viewing from the obstacles faced during the application of videoconferencing, three issues appeared, including bad signal connection, technical problem, and surrounding disturbance. In line with the obstacles faced during the videoconferencing, the current study's finding supported prior studies' findings. Consistent with prior study (Archibald et al., 2019), the limited connection to the internet resulted in low quality of the sound and video received by the lecturer. Since the students lived separately in different areas, the quality of internet connection may vary; for those who live in urban areas, they can receive better connections rather than one who lives in the village. Then, the lack of the internet connection also became a major drawback for utilizing the videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium in the other study (Archibald et al., 2019). It was elucidated that the technical issues occurred caused by participant's less adequate equipment setup at their home. In this case, the unavailability of supporting devices becomes a matter for the students in having an online speaking assessment as it can also influence the quality of the sound both produced and heard by the students during the speaking assessment. Meanwhile, the issue on surrounding disturbance has not clearly described on previous studies. In this study, the surrounding disturbance became one of the issues since the interruptions of surrounding activities cannot be avoided by the students. The students conducted the online speaking assessment at home and common surrounding disturbance occurred, such as family matter, neighborhood activity, and the commute. As a distraction, the surrounding disturbance certainly will influence the students' focus on producing the language. Therefore, it can be concluded that bad signal connection,

technical problem, and surrounding disturbance become the obstacles faced during the videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium and it also answers the second research question.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The present study has unraveled the perception and the common obstacles faced during the implementation of videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium. The majority of the students perceived negatively toward the implementation of videoconferencing as a medium of speaking assessment. These negative reactions occurred due to the pressure and anxiety along the online speaking assessment process. As a result, lower quality of language production can potentially happen. Moreover, the obstacles faced, such as broken earphones, lagging screens, and surrounding disturbances, also contributed an impact on students' language production and the sound heard by the students during the online speaking assessment.

In this disruptive era, the needs for technology integration cannot be neglected. However, the negative impact occurs in the utilization of technology tool should also be considered and considered. From the results of the present study, the application of videoconferencing as a medium in assessing students' speaking ability needs to be reappraised to preview its function whether it can be an alternative way in assessing students or it contributes a drawback effect on the assessment process.

### LIMITATION

In conducting the study, the researcher realized that the study is limited to the technology devices used during videoconferencing. The present study does not limit the participant to use their personal owning technology devices which have different features and internet connection quality. Therefore, different results may occur if the participants of the study are facilitated with proper technology devices and support, including access to the internet with proper speed, the proper technical support in videoconferencing, and less distraction from the environment.

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## BIO-PROFILE

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