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THE EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING WHATSAPP APP GROUP DURING THE PANDEMIC SITUATION

By

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Abstract:

WhatsApp is a mobile phone application and web-based social network that integrates various features used to communicate with other users, including education, business, and entertainment. This study aimed to investigate EFL students' perspectives on WhatsApp as a medium for teaching and learning during the pandemic. The qualitative descriptive method was used in this study. A total of 30 students from the seventh grade in SMP 13 Jember were included in this study. The questionnaire was designed with both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The Guttman Scale is the format for a closed-ended questionnaire. The open-ended questions allowed participants to freely communicate and express their views and opinions, but there were no possibilities for using WhatsApp in English classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 epidemic, students' attitudes toward the WhatsApp application in English classes were tested using closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires. The information was gathered using a questionnaire and a phone interview. Following the completion of the research, we will learn how EFL students perceive WhatsApp as an online teaching-learning media during a pandemic. Furthermore, the results of this study that gauged participants' perception of the use of WhatsApp in learning vocabulary show that, generally, participants have positive attitudes towards learning new vocabulary items via WhatsApp. Implications for teaching and future research are discussed.

Keywords: covid-19; EFL students; online learning; WhatsApp,

Abstrak:

WhatsApp adalah aplikasi ponsel dan jejaring sosial berbasis web yang mengintegrasikan berbagai fitur yang digunakan untuk berkomunikasi dengan pengguna lain, termasuk pendidikan, bisnis, dan hiburan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki perspektif siswa EFL tentang WhatsApp sebagai media belajar mengajar di masa pandemi. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Sebanyak 30 siswa dari kelas tujuh SMP 13 Jember diikutsertakan dalam penelitian ini. Kuesioner dirancang dengan pertanyaan tertutup dan terbuka. Skala Guttman adalah format untuk kuesioner tertutup. Pertanyaan terbuka memungkinkan peserta untuk bebas berkomunikasi dan mengungkapkan pandangan dan pendapat mereka, tetapi tidak ada kemungkinan untuk menggunakan WhatsApp di ruang kelas bahasa Inggris selama pandemi COVID-19. Selama pandemi COVID-19, sikap siswa terhadap aplikasi WhatsApp di kelas bahasa Inggris diuji menggunakan kuesioner tertutup dan terbuka. Informasi dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner dan wawancara telepon. Setelah selesainya penelitian,

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kita akan mempelajari bagaimana siswa EFL memandang WhatsApp sebagai media belajar-mengajar online selama pandemi. Lebih lanjut, hasil penelitian yang mengukur persepsi peserta terhadap penggunaan WhatsApp dalam pembelajaran kosakata ini menunjukkan bahwa, secara umum, peserta memiliki sikap positif terhadap pembelajaran kosakata baru melalui WhatsApp. Implikasi untuk pengajaran dan penelitian di masa depan dibahas.

Kata Kunci: covid-19, pembelajaran online, whatsapp, siswa EFL

INTRODUCTION

Most Indonesian schools and institutions and the presidential briefing and campaign were closed in the middle of March 2020, allowing people to work, learn, and pray from home. The Indonesian government adopted two laws, government regulation and Health Ministry regulation, by early April 2020 to apply a wide-scale social limitation (Wahyuni & Utami, 2022). It is the same as a partial lockdown. As a result, offices, schools, universities, and places of worship must close, and people must rely on internet activities such as Work from Home and Learn from Home (Muhfahroyin & Sujarwanta, 2023). As an educational sector, all schools and institutions have implemented the policy for online learning. In a circumstance where teachers and students are being forced to switch from offline face-to-face sessions in the classroom to a digital/virtual teaching system based on various online platforms or applications. They must immediately learn and change their teaching and learning management to handle this unexpected scenario. Similarly, quick changes in educational materials, media, and assessments are required (Serhan, 2020). There are no variations in how teachers and students approach the subject in English as a foreign language.

Therefore, the researcher conducted a study about using Internet media for online learning because the researcher had experience teaching activities in junior high school. Many problems were faced by students when they had learning activities in the classroom. Furthermore, the world, including Indonesia, was unacceptable because the virus corona 19 engulfed the world. So, the government passed a policy to stop all outdoor activities, including those in schools.

Teachers and students must use Internet media for online learning in this environment. In the new industrial 4.0 era, online learning assists learning, but teachers and students are still unprepared to meet this challenge (Sari, 2020). According to Ariyanti (2020), using internet platforms has become more difficult in the 4.0 industrial revolution. They must adhere to the rules for their learning to proceed normally. In this COVID-19 Pandemic, one of

the most common applications utilized by teachers for teaching is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is not an application specifically designed for educational purposes. It is a messaging app with various features such as group, text, audio, video, and calling. Many lecturers used WhatsApp as a virtual classroom application during the Covid-19 pandemic (Ariyanti, 2020; Harida, 2020). According to Lestiyawati (2020), WhatsApp is utilized in educational activities for a variety of reasons: (1) it is simple to use; (2) It makes use of fewer package data; and (3) it provides a variety of beneficial functions group, audio message, video call, and voice note are just a few examples (Lestiyawati, 2020).

One of the most well-known mobile applications is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a well-known and commonly used social networking app. It could be used in education to help students enhance their language abilities as part of mobile learning. State Junior High School students and teachers have been connecting using WhatsApp. WhatsApp is one of the unique teaching approaches that can entice pupils and provide additional learning opportunities. Because not all students can support other media or platforms in the field, such as signals, unsupported smartphones, and others, students and teachers are using WhatsApp (Barhoumi, 2020). WhatsApp enables students to work more efficiently and effectively. According to Lestiyawati (2020), WhatsApp is the first e-learning application to be supported and effective at increasing student learning success and developing positive attitudes toward using WhatsApp in class. We are aware that some schools or students only support this platform. In this study, the title students' effectiveness of using WhatsApp group to increase EFL during the pandemic was used to determine the effectiveness of learning using WhatsApp media platform(Lestiyawati, 2020). Thus, using WhatsApp is a variant of online learning.

Online learning is the process of obtaining knowledge, producing meaning, and moving through learning experiences by using the Internet to have access to materials, to interact with content, teachers, and other students, and to obtain learning assistance (Ally in Nugroho, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). The term "online learning" refers to the process of learning via the Internet that takes place at a distance and is aided by electronic devices that require an Internet connection: laptops, tablets, smartphones, and personal computers (Medford, 2004,p.1; Gonzalez & Louis, 2018,p.1). Online learning is an effective medium for students (Fauzan and Nadia (2021, p,104). Furthermore, Raad (2020) claims that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Through the use of numerous tools such as Zoom, Teams, Veeva, and Google Classroom, among others, students were able to learn from the comfort of their own

homes (Raheem & Khan, 2020). These concepts could be combined to generate the following definition. Online learning is a teaching and learning system that uses electronic media, primarily the Internet, to access materials, engage with content, teachers, and other students, and get help in the learning process.

WhatsApp is a method for talking with people via instant messaging, according to Nurazizah et al. (2019). Text messages, documents, videos, audio, and images, among other things, can be sent via WhatsApp. Besides that, Hanisi et al. (2018) showed WhatsApp as a smartphone web-based instant messaging service that allows users to send and receive messages in various media types, including text, image, video, and audio (Hanisi et al., 2018). Finally, WhatsApp is a smartphone messaging program that users can download. It is a low-cost, simple-to-use, rapid, and private form of communication. WhatsApp allows users to exchange messages with one another over the Internet and includes a variety of valuable features, including various file formats, text messages, documents, films, audio, and photographs.

No one can deny that WhatsApp is a valuable tool for serving others. Internet learning provided a multitude of objectives during the Covid-19 outbreak. WhatsApp can be applied as a platform for online learning. The material was first presented to the students in the group by the teacher, and The professors then gave directions for students to ask questions or share their thoughts on the content. When students offer their thoughts or opinions, they must include any missing names or numbers so that all students are informed. Students are allowed to respond, and the lecturer responds to questions and comments from students, as well as starts new issues and posts queries. WhatsApp's various characteristics assist pupils in becoming enthusiastically interested in learning activities (Sahidillah & Miftahurrisqi, 2019).

WA assists students in anticipating their needs, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborative learning, and forming relationships that support learner-to-learner learning for more reliable and advanced learning. Lecturers can use WA to affect student attitudes. Student attitudes might be influenced by multidimensional communication. For example, if a rude message is flung, the teacher can scold and correct it right away.

WhatsApp can evaluate students during distance learning by assessing learning activities, learning results, and students' attitudes. WA can be applied as a tool for information sharing and is instrumental in pandemic situations. The rate at which information is

exchanged is high-speed. Text, image, video, and audio are just ways users can communicate. Shodiq and Zainiyati (2020).

Students' enthusiasm to study can be boosted by increased conversation possibilities afforded by maximizing the usage of WA. It is also because WA has a group chat feature that allows students to have group discussions. A variety of features will also improve the flow of the group discussion. WA can be applied to share lesson materials since it includes saving PDF, Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents. The ability to share lecture materials allows students to learn and discuss wherever and whenever they want.

Based on their observations of conversations on WA, Suyudi, Khusaini, Sugiyanto, and Winarto (2017) discovered that Students can communicate attendance information from lectures using the course's Group WA, and some can be supplied privately through the lecturer's personal WA (Khusaini et al., 2017). Based on all the explanations above, the researchers set the research questions: what do the students' perceptions of **using WhatsApp increase students' EFL during the pandemic?**

METHOD

Design

This research employs a quantitative study under a survey study with quantitative data. The goal was to represent the current state of the study topics (Gay, 1990; Gay & Airasian, 2002). The study aimed to provide data and a concrete example of the social situation, as is typical of descriptive research. The descriptive study aspect of this study is to obtain and collect simple data. It uses descriptive language to explain the students' viewpoints on facts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students in the English Teaching Department used WhatsApp in class. This research was carried out at SMP on 13 January, focusing on seventh-graders who utilized WhatsApp in class during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant

A total of 30 students from the seventh grade were included in the study. Slovin's formula was used in the sampling technique. The stratified random sample technique was used to select 30 respondents. The researchers employed a questionnaire to answer the research question. A questionnaire is a tool that consists of a series of questions or statements. Participants in the study were given it to elicit their responses.

Instrument

The questionnaire was designed with both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The Guttman Scale is the format for a closed-ended questionnaire. The open-ended questions allowed participants to freely communicate and express their views and opinions, but there were no possibilities for using WhatsApp in English classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 epidemic, students' attitudes toward the WhatsApp application in English classes were tested using closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires.

Data collection

This research took one class. The researcher used seventh grade as the sample of this research because this class has higher quality in terms of motivation to learn more than the other class. In this study, the researcher used the questionnaire as an instrument. The questionnaire was given to participants. After students fill out the questionnaire. The researcher processed data from the questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire results showed that 84% of students preferred using WhatsApp as a medium in the learning process in class.

Data analysis

The technique of quantitative data analysis. Quantitative data is a technique used to analyze and count data. In this study, the researcher used quantitative data to determine the effectiveness of the students' use of WhatsApp to increase EFL during a pandemic situation. To analyze the data to calculate the percentage of the students' effectiveness of using WhatsApp app group to increase EFL during the pandemic situation, the formula used as follows:

$$P = \frac{X_2 - X_1}{X_1} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = Percentage

X₁ = The score of agree

X₂ = The score of disagree (Gay, 1981)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION***Findings***

According to the study's conclusions, students have opinions about using WhatsApp in the classroom. To be more specific, consider the following:

WhatsApp as media in doing online learning process

Students see WA as a platform for during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was much online learning going on. Students' responses during the COVID-19 pandemic show that WA is an effective medium for online learning; 30 respondents (or 73.2 percent of the total) agreed, while just five (or 26.8%) disagreed. This shows that most learners thought WA was a suitable medium for online learning during the COVID-19 epidemic.

According to students who agreed that WA was an excellent online learning medium, WA is practical and straightforward. The features of WA are beneficial, it saves internet quota, the application is light, it allows the lecturer to observe the students better, and it facilitates communication between the lecturer and the students. On the other hand, students who disagreed with that idea gave the following reasons: The group's member capacity is limited, allowing students to cheat easily; The file upload space is limited, and new talks quickly build up on top of existing texts.

WhatsApp as an educational media

Students have regarded WA as an instructional medium since the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the results of a questionnaire provided by the Researcher to SMP 13 Jember students, most pupils believe WA is an excellent teaching medium. Only five respondents, or 26.3 percent, disagreed with the statement, indicating that 30 respondents, or 73.2 percent, agreed. This discovery suggests that during the COVID-19 pandemic, most students regard WA as an effective educational tool.

Many characteristics of the applications improved communication between students and professors, made it easier to share learning materials and knowledge, used less internet quota, was widely utilized, and could be accessed from anywhere, according to students who agreed that WhatsApp was a suitable education medium. Students who objected did so for the following reasons: face-to-face learning is more superficial, Students lose focus in the learning process because it is more accessible, the file size that can be uploaded is limited, and older cell phones are not supported.

WhatsApp is an application for group discussions related to learning activities.

Students' perspectives on WA as a tool for group discussions since the Covid-19 pandemic. Most students agree that WA is an effective medium for group discussions, according to a survey done by SMP 13 Jember students. It is because 130 people agreed with

the statement, accounting for 79.2 percent of all responses, while eight disagreed, accounting for 20.8 percent. During the COVID-19 epidemic, it was revealed that most students thought WA was an excellent app for organizing group conversations about homework.

The following were why the students agreed: Students can hold online discussions with themselves and instructors using WhatsApp's Group, Voice Notes, Voice Call, and Video-Call functions, spend less internet capacity, and information about learning materials spreads quickly. Students who disagree do so for various reasons, including WhatsApp being inefficient because not all members participate in the discussion, necessitating another supported application.

Discussion

This section discusses the research findings. As previously stated, the study's findings During the COVID-19 pandemic, WA proved to be a powerful learning medium. During the COVID-19 epidemic, students' remarks on using the WA app in English Teaching Department lessons demonstrated this.

According to the findings, most students believe that during the COVID-19 pandemic, WA is a suitable medium for online learning. Students who agreed that WA is a practical and straightforward online learning medium cited the following reasons: It is practical and straightforward to use; WA's features are helpful; it saves internet allowance; the program is very light; it allows the instructor to view the pupils easily; and it facilitates lecturer-student dialogue. It agrees with Sahidillah and Miftahurrisqi's (2019) findings that WA may be a learning medium because it includes features such as groups, voice notes, video calls, etc. This is also to your advantage (Sahidillah & Miftahurrisqi, 2019).

Mbukusa's (2018) concept demonstrated that WA is one of the most versatile teaching tools available, allowing pupils to express themselves through the WA's different characteristics (Mbukusa, 2018). It also supports Dhahir's (2020) findings that WA benefits online teaching and learning (Dhahir, 2020).

According to the findings, students believe WA is an excellent instructional medium. The following are reasons why students believe WhatsApp is a valuable educational tool: Many features in the application make communication between students and lecturers simpler to avoid misunderstandings, make it easier to share learning resources and knowledge, use less internet quota, and are accessible from anywhere. The findings supported Hamid's (2020)

claim that during the COVID-19 pandemic, students had a positive perception of online learning (Hamid, 2020). The discovery also clearly supports Shodiq and Zainiyati's hypothesis (2020), which states that WA could be used as a medium by lecturers because multidimensional communication has the potential to shape student attitudes, which is crucial in education. For example, if a rude message is flung, the teacher can scold and correct it right away (Shodiq & Zainiyati, 2020). WA in education, according to Yalcinalp and Gulbahar (2010), assists learners in anticipating requirements, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborative learning, as well as developing relationships that enable learner-to-learner exchanges for more dependable and advanced learning (Yalcinalp & Gulbahar, 2010). According to Plana et al. (2013), WhatsApp's instant messaging application increases students' interest and preparedness to study in immersion programs (Plana et al., 2015).

According to the study, students have also liked WA as a tool for exchanging knowledge since the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who think WA is a great concept were given the following reasons by the media for sharing information: information regarding lectures WA has spread quickly; almost all students have it on their smartphone, and it is easily accessible. They are connected and can communicate with one another. The information could be easily forwarded to other contacts, there were many valuable features for sharing information, and it could work even with a bad connection, which is consistent with Shodiq and Zainiyati's (2020) assertion that WA could be used as an application to share information, particularly in the current pandemic conditions where information is changing at a rapid pace (Shodiq & Zainiyati, 2020). WA is a smartphone and web-based instant messaging service that lets users send and receive messages in various formats, including text, image, video, and audio, according to La Hanisi, Risdiany, Dwi Utami, and Sulisworo (2018) (La Hanisi et al., 2018).

The following finding is that students favor WA as a medium for conducting group discussions about the lesson process. Students who agreed that WhatsApp is an excellent medium for group conversations gave the following reasons: WhatsApp features such as Group, Voice Notes, Voice calls, and Video Calls assist students in having online discussions, making it easier for students to have discussions among themselves and between students and lecturers, using less internet quota, and quickly disseminating information about learning material. According to Kukulska-Hulme, Norris, and Donohue (2015), increased conversation possibilities through WA could increase kids' enthusiasm for learning. It is also because WA

has a group chat feature that allows students to have group discussions. The conversations will operate more smoothly thanks to various features (La Hanisi et al., 2018)(La Hanisi et al., 2018).

Another finding is that most students believe WA is an effective medium for increasing literacy and sharing educational materials. The following are some of the reasons stated by students who believe WhatsApp is an excellent medium for literacy and sharing learning materials: WhatsApp's group feature makes it simple to distribute information to a large number of people, Material things downloaded using WhatsApp can be saved to your smartphone's storage right away. It is relevant to the findings of (Suyudi et al., 2017), who found that WA may be used to share learning materials because it has a feature that lets users save documents in PDF, Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint formats(Khusaini et al., 2017). This finding is consistent with Centinkaya's (2017) findings, which revealed that students developed positive attitudes toward using WhatsApp in class (Cetinkaya, 2017).

WA is also well-liked by students as an application to track their attendance. Students who agreed that WhatsApp is a suitable medium for taking student attendance did so for a variety of reasons, including making it easier for students to state their attendance in lectures, creating an attendance list, working with poor connections, and being able to see the timeliness of students taking absence. Students can offer attendance information from lectures via Group WA of the courses, and some can be delivered directly via instructors' personal WA, according to Suyudi et al. (2017); Khusaini et al. (2017), based on their observations of the track record of dialogues on WA. The students eventually disputed the usage of WA as a learning outcome evaluation and assessment benchmark. Students who disagreed stated that using another application for assessment is easier. It is unproductive and inefficient in terms of evaluation, as many students copy-paste the assignment, the upload file size is limited, and it cannot examine students' authentic abilities and potential. This contradicts Shodiq and Zainiyati's (2020) previous findings, which claimed that WA might be used to assess students during the remote learning process, including analyzing learning activities, learning outcomes, and attitudes (Shodiq & Zainiyati, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

During the COVID-19 epidemic, students' perceptions of the use of WhatsApp in English Teaching Department classrooms were favorable, according to the findings of this

study. They agreed that WhatsApp is a fantastic platform for online learning, educational media, and applications. During the Covid-19 pandemic, information was shared for a group discussion. Learning process, literacy improvement, and sharing of learning material Students, on the other hand, were divided on whether WhatsApp should be used as the standard for evaluation and assessment. According to the findings of this study, WhatsApp could be utilized to conduct online learning because it has been shown to assist students in becoming more engaged in their studies. This study could lead to the production of various related items for future scholars interested in this subject. Researchers can delve more into the students' perceptions about using WA in the Speaking class in the future. In the future, researchers will be able to look into the issues that students have when utilizing WhatsApp to learn.

Limitations

This research is limited to investigating the implementation of online English lessons and the learning process via WhatsApp. It also investigates the difficulties teachers encounter, teachers' problem-solving, and students' perceptions about implementing online teaching and learning via WhatsApp. The research data was collected through a random sample technique, which was used to select 30 respondents. The researchers employed a questionnaire to answer the research question. Furthermore, the researcher hopes the next researcher can develop this study using other learning methods and online media.

Implication

Based on the result of the research and conclusion regarding the use of WhatsApp in English Teaching Department classrooms, which is enjoyable, the researcher would like to suggest the following: The teacher should give enough opportunities for the students to practice their English ability through social media, one of them is WhatsApp because it is easy to present and enjoyable for the students in the learning process. The English teacher who teaches in school at some level should be creative in teaching English. Especially in learning English because to master it, it needs more media or methods to improve it. The teacher should provide easy and fun speaking activities. Therefore, the students may follow the class or be active and responsive. The students should be diligent in practicing their English ability whenever and wherever. The students should not be afraid to practice in English. In other words, they should have self-confidence in learning English for the following research. The subsequent research is expected to develop social networking for

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following research because there are still many things that need to be careful, like reading, writing, and listening. In this research, the researcher focuses on learning English generally by using WhatsApp in school.

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